



Capitol Key

December 2003

CONGRESS PASSES MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG BILL



Despite two procedural hurdles that could have derailed the bill for the year, the US Senate passed the Medicare prescription drug bill on November 25th by a vote of **54 to 44**. In the early morning of November 22nd, the House of Representatives passed the bill by a vote of **220 to 215**. The bill will now be sent to President Bush, who is expected to sign it into law on December 8th.

Enactment of this legislation will provide the most sweeping reform of the Medicare program since its creation in 1965. The Medicare prescription drug bill will not only provide seniors with an effective and affordable Medicare prescription drug benefit, it also preserves their access to physician services by halting the planned Medicare physician payment cuts.

As passed, the Medicare prescription drug bill will replace the 4.5% cut in physician payments scheduled for 2004, with a positive update of at least 1.5%, and it will also assure the same positive update in 2005. The bill also includes other measures strongly supported by ACP, including: regulatory relief provisions to reform the Medicare audit process, improve carrier performance, and require testing of alternatives to onerous Evaluation and Management paperwork requirements; and incentives--rather than mandates--for electronic prescribing

For more information on the passage of the Medicare prescription drug bill, including the House and Senate votes, please visit the College's Legislative Action Center (LAC) at <http://capwiz.com/acp/home/>.



GRASSROOTS SPOTLIGHT: ALASKA CHAPTER ENROLLS TWO-THIRDS OF MEMBERSHIP IN KEY CONTACT PROGRAM

After receiving a membership roster of Alaska key contacts, Alaska Governor, Richard Neubauer, MD, FACP, set a goal to double the number of key contacts in Alaska within two weeks. When he began his

recruitment efforts, the Alaska chapter had 148 members, 17 of which were key contacts. Dr.

Neubauer took an old fashioned approach to reaching his goal by calling members of the chapter that were not enrolled in the key contact program. To make things as easy as possible for those members to enroll, Dr. Neubauer took down their contact information over the phone and then entered it into the online key contact enrollment form himself.

Only a few days after he began, Dr. Neubauer surpassed his goal of doubling the number of key contacts in Alaska. He then revised his goal to enroll half of the chapter membership in the key contact program. In less than two weeks, Dr. Neubauer again reached his goal, enrolling 74 Alaska members in the key contact program. Encouraged by the positive responses he had been receiving, Dr. Neubauer then set a final goal to enroll 100 of the 148 chapter members in the key contact program.

About a month after Dr. Neubauer began his recruitment efforts, two-thirds of the Alaska chapter's membership (98 members) is enrolled in the key contact program. Just shy of his final goal, the experience allowed Dr. Neubauer to "learn interesting things" about his chapter's membership that will "hopefully make an impact in our advocacy efforts."

THE HealthCARE ACT OF 2003 CONTINUES TO AMASS CO-SPONSORS

Although action on the HealthCARE Act of 2003 (S.1030/H.R.2402) will not occur this year, ACP continues to urge your members of Congress to co-sponsor the bill and make access to care a priority issue during the next congressional session. Since Representatives Steven LaTourette (R-OH) and Marcy Kaptur (D-OH) introduced the HealthCARE Act in June, there are an additional 13 co-sponsors: Reps. William Clay Jr. (D-MO), James Moran (D-VA), Danny Davis (D-IL) and Donna Christian-Christensen (D-VI), John Conyers, Jr.(D-MI), Paul M. Grijalva (D-AZ), Wm. L. Clay, Jr.(D-MO), Tim Ryan (D-OH), Bob Filner (D-CA), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Jim

McDermott (D-WA), Elijah E. Cummings (D-MD), and John Olver (D-MA).

Center at <http://capwiz.com/acp/home/> or use the College's toll-free Grassroots Hotline (1-888-218-7770).

To urge your members of Congress to co-sponsor the HealthCARE Act, visit the ACP Legislative Action

**LEGISLATIVE ALERTS FOR THE MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG BILL
GENERATE RECORD NUMBER OF KEY CONTACT RESPONSES**

Thanks to your efforts, Congress heard about the need to pass the Medicare prescription drug bill from every ACP Chapter. In fact, since mid-September, 5,700 letters and phone calls from ACP members were made to Congress – the most responses to a legislative alert ever! Due to the volume of responses, we could not list each individual's name in the Key Contact Honor Roll. Instead a breakdown by state is provided below (please bear in mind that US Chapter membership ranges from slightly over 100 to over 10,000).

Chapter	Total Responses	Chapter	Total Responses
<i>Alabama</i>	53	Montana	17
<i>Alaska</i>	59	<i>Nebraska</i>	40
<i>Arizona</i>	69	<i>Nevada</i>	29
<i>Arkansas</i>	33	New Hampshire	33
<i>California</i>	308	<i>New Jersey</i>	161
<i>Colorado</i>	71	<i>New Mexico</i>	35
<i>Connecticut</i>	131	<i>New York*</i>	989
<i>Delaware</i>	38	<i>North Carolina</i>	93
<i>D.C.</i>	5	<i>North Dakota</i>	15
<i>Florida*</i>	451	<i>Ohio</i>	226
<i>Georgia</i>	115	<i>Oklahoma</i>	69
<i>Hawaii</i>	7	<i>Oregon</i>	62
<i>Idaho</i>	16	<i>Pennsylvania*</i>	577
<i>Illinois</i>	204	<i>Rhode Island</i>	73
Indiana	78	<i>South Carolina</i>	78
<i>Iowa</i>	61	South Dakota	14
<i>Kansas</i>	39	<i>Tennessee</i>	118
<i>Kentucky</i>	43	<i>Texas</i>	190
<i>Louisiana</i>	79	<i>Utah</i>	22
<i>Maine</i>	19	<i>Vermont</i>	34
<i>Maryland</i>	181	<i>Virginia</i>	193
<i>Massachusetts</i>	95	<i>Washington</i>	93
<i>Michigan</i>	84	<i>West Virginia</i>	18
<i>Minnesota</i>	66	<i>Wisconsin</i>	75
<i>Mississippi</i>	39	<i>Wyoming</i>	12
<i>Missouri</i>	91	TOTAL	5,701

- * The FL, NY, and PA chapter totals also include responses from their chapter's legislative action center.
- Italics* indicate that chapter letters regarding the Medicare prescription drug bill were sent to the congressional delegation of that state.
- Total includes chapter letters, emails, faxes, calls made via the Grassroots Hotline, responses from chapter legislative action centers, and other reported contacts.
- Last year's total for Medicare fee schedule alert responses (October – February 2002): 5,597

To ensure that you continue receiving the *Capitol Key*, please report any changes in your fax number or email address to Kathy Heabel at kheabel@acponline.org or 1-800-338-2746, ext. 4532.