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## **ACP Statement on Senate vote, S. 1776**

**By Joseph W. Stubbs, MD, FACP  
President, American College of Physicians**

The American College of Physicians, representing 129,000 internal medicine physicians and medical student members, is gravely disappointed by the failure of the “cloture” vote today in the U.S. Senate on S. 1776, the Medicare Physician Fairness Act of 2009. We commend Senator Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), the bill’s principal sponsor, for her diligent efforts to persuade her colleagues to support this long-overdue legislation to sunset the flawed SGR formula and put an end to the cycle of annual Medicare cuts that threaten seniors’ access to physician services. We also thank the 47 senators who, like Senator Stabenow, voted to allow S. 1776 to proceed to a vote.

For too many years now, Congress has enacted short-term patches to the SGR cuts and used misleading budget gimmicks to hide the simple fact that paying physicians a fair fee for their services will result in Medicare spending more than if the devastating SGR cuts are permitted to go into effect. Many of those who voted against cloture have stated that they agree that the SGR needs to be replaced, but when it came down to a bill to actually sunset it, once and for all, they regrettably voted the other way. Although many will claim that their vote against cloture was a vote for fiscal responsibility, there is nothing fiscally responsible about pretending that Medicare will save money, from cuts that Congress has no intention to let go into effect, in order to make it seem like Medicare will spend less than it really will.

The cloture vote on S. 1776 cannot be the end of the story. ACP will continue to insist that Congress repeal the unworkable and destabilizing Medicare SGR and create a better system for updating physician services. Congress must end the practice of enacting short-term patches that fail to provide the stability needed to initiate comprehensive physician payment reform or the assurance patients need that their access will not be reduced by devastating physician payment cuts.

Finally, the American College of Physicians rejects the cynical charge made by some that physicians’ support for health care reform is conditioned on repeal of the SGR. Instead, ACP supports health care reform because we believe that all Americans should have access to affordable care. Our positions on the pending health reform proposals will continue to be based on how they align with ACP’s long-standing policies on ensuring coverage, reversing a

catastrophic shortage of primary care physicians, and testing and implementing new models of payment and delivery to align positive incentives with the value of care provided. At the same time, we believe that repeal of the SGR is necessary to provide the stability needed to achieve real and lasting physician payment reform, to implement payment reforms to support the value of care provided by primary care physicians, and to assure seniors' access to care.

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The American College of Physicians ([www.acponline.org](http://www.acponline.org)) is the largest medical specialty organization and the second-largest physician group in the United States. ACP members include 129,000 internal medicine physicians (internists), related subspecialists, and medical students. Internists specialize in the prevention, detection, and treatment of illness in adults. Follow ACP on Twitter ([www.twitter.com/acpinternists](https://www.twitter.com/acpinternists)) and Facebook ([www.facebook.com/acpinternists](https://www.facebook.com/acpinternists)).