

Congress acts to extend 2011 Medicare rates through February 29, 2012

Physicians got a brief reprieve from a 27.4 percent Medicare pay cut Friday when the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives each passed a two-month extension of several important policies that expire on Jan. 1.

The U.S. Senate last week voted to extend current Medicare payment rates for two months. After the House first balked at the two-month extension earlier in the week, the two chambers reached an agreement to extend the physician payment rates as well as the two percentage point Social Security payroll tax cut, and to extend unemployment benefits. A House-Senate conference committee will convene in January to work on a longer-term agreement.

At a press conference, House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) said the goal is to extend all the expiring programs for a full year, except for the physician payment cut reprieve, which is to be extended for two years.

AMA President Peter W. Carmel, MD, called on Congress to “enact a real and fiscally responsible solution to this sorry cycle of scheduled cuts and short-term patches that compromises access to care for patients and drives up costs for taxpayers. Members of Congress need to use this time to work in a bipartisan manner to provide long-term stability for seniors, military families and the physicians who care for them.”

Terri Marchiori
Director, Federation Relations
American Medical Association
312.464.5271
terri.marchiori@ama-assn.org