



American College of Surgeons

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The Honorable Charles B. Rangel
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Committee on Ways and Means
U.S. House of Representatives
1102 Longworth House Office
Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John D. Dingell, Jr.
Chairman
Committee on Energy and
Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
2125 Rayburn House Office
Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Rangel and Chairman Dingell:

On behalf of the over 74,000 Fellows of the American College of Surgeons, I am writing to express the College's support for your recently introduced legislation, the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008 (H.R. 6331), that would preserve Medicare beneficiaries' access to quality surgical care.

As you know, on July 1, Medicare payments for surgical care will be cut 10.6 percent. On January 1, 2009, Medicare payments will be cut an additional 5.4 percent. Your legislation would not only stop the 10.6 percent cut in July and maintain current payment levels for the remainder of 2008, but it would also replace the 5.4 percent cut in 2009 with a 1.1 percent increase in Medicare physician payments. The uncertainty of Medicare payments makes it increasingly difficult for surgeons and their practices to plan for the expenses that they will incur as they serve their patients. The provisions included in this legislation would enable surgeons and surgical practices to plan for the rising costs that they will continue to face over the next year and a half. Finally, by addressing payment levels through 2009, your legislation would provide Congress not only with much needed time but with a framework within which Congress can study and develop the systemic reforms needed to preserve access to quality surgical care and other physician services.

Thank you for introducing this legislation that will preserve access to surgical care. Please know that we stand ready to work with you to ensure this legislation's passage.

Sincerely,

Thomas R. Russell, MD, FACS
Executive Director

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