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Klein Votes to Override President's Veto of Medicare Fix

Washington, D.C. – Today, U.S. Representative Ron Klein (FL-22) joined a bipartisan majority of his House colleagues to override the President's veto of legislation that would halt a scheduled 10.6 percent pay cut for Medicare physicians. The legislation, H.R. 6331, the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act, passed both the House and the Senate with veto-proof majorities. The President vetoed the legislation this morning.

"It is unfortunate that President Bush attempted to balance the budget on the backs of doctors, patients and hospitals," Klein said after the vote. "The President's veto would have denied millions of seniors and other Medicare recipients the right to see the doctors they know and trust. I am proud that my colleagues of both political parties stood up today to override this misguided veto."

The Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act was originally passed by the House on June 24 and by the Senate on July 9, with bipartisan, veto-proof majorities in both Houses of Congress. The legislation blocks the scheduled cut in reimbursements to doctors accepting Medicare patients, and provides a 1.1 percent increase in Medicare physician payments for 2009, along with a 2 percent quality reporting bonus for doctors.

By blocking the scheduled cut, this legislation also ensures active-duty military personnel and military retirees will have continued access to the doctors of their choice through Tricare, the military health care program. Because Tricare uses the Medicare fee schedule to pay their doctors, when Medicare cuts physicians payments, Tricare physician payments are cut as well.

"Our military men and women deserve exceptional medical care from the doctors of their choice," Klein said. "It is unconscionable that the President would threaten the quality of care our service members receive by allowing the Medicare cuts to go into effect.

"The House took a stand today, and just in the nick of time. The cuts to Medicare physicians were scheduled to go into effect tomorrow, and it adds insult to injury that the President waited until literally the last moment to veto legislation passed by Congress last week. Yet we in Congress acted quickly to eliminate the cuts, and it was the right thing to do for America's seniors and military personnel."

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