

Dr. Burgess Weekly Video Address July 26, 2013

“Preserving Medicare”

Hello, this is your congressman, Michael Burgess. I wanted to use the time this week to talk to you about legislation that recently passed my subcommittee of Health in Energy and Commerce. Next week it will be voted on by the full committee. It's going to reform what's known as the Sustainable Growth Rate, what we've always called, “The Doc Fix.”

The formula was set up almost 15 years ago as a way limit how much doctors are paid for treating Medicare patients. In theory, it was supposed to control Medicare costs and keep them from increasing too fast, but in reality it cut payment rates for doctors seeing Medicare patients every year. While in most cases Congress hasn't let those cuts go through, Medicare rates haven't been allowed to grow at all either. Over that time it means that inflation is causing doctors' costs to far outpace what they are being paid by Medicare.

This is the reason that a lot of doctors have started to limit the number of Medicare patients they will see, or have stopped taking Medicare patients all together. It puts our seniors in a tough spot, leaving them without the ability to see the doctors that they want, and get the treatment they need from the doctor of choice. It's a sad situation that is difficult for both patients and doctors.

For years Republicans and Democrats have agreed that this is bad policy, but they couldn't agree on how to fix it. Congress has made a number of attempts to reform the formula over the years without ever making much progress.

Over the past year and a half, I've been working with a group of Congressman from both sides of the aisle to come up with a way to fix how Medicare pays our doctors. After a lot of work and long nights, we approved a bill in our subcommittee this past week with overwhelming bipartisan support that would permanently repeal the Sustainable Growth Rate formula and replace it with a solution that is good for both doctors and Medicare patients.

The legislation does a couple of important things. First, for the next five years it increases medical reimbursement rates each year to adjust for inflation. Then for the next five years it institutes a reporting system that will ensure the best medical practices are provided to Medicare patients. It does this by giving additional fee increases to doctors who perform up to the best stands of their field. This would reward doctors who do a good job in taking care of our seniors.

By passing this legislation we can ensure that doctors can afford to keep seeing Medicare patients and that seniors can get the high quality care they need. There is still a lot of work ahead of us, but I'm optimistic. We have a real chance at fixing this problem in a fiscally responsible way- one that will benefit both our seniors and doctors.

Thank you for taking the time to listen. For more information on legislative issues before the United States Congress please visit my website burgess.house.gov. May God bless you and your family and as always may God bless Texas.