



ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY

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General Gordon R. Sullivan
United States Army (Ret.)
President

November 13, 2009

On behalf of the more than 105,000 members of the Association of the United States Army, I write to urge you and your colleagues to reverse the planned 21% reduction in the Medicare Physician Payment rate set to occur in January 2010 by voting for H.R. 3961, the Medicare Physician Payment Reform Act of 2009.

In the past, Congress reversed similar proposed cuts, and in 2003, actually increased the rate. Passing H.R. 3961 will repeal the flawed formula that results in annual reduction requirements and replace it with one that emphasizes primary and preventative care services.

Declining participation of providers in Medicare and TRICARE due to low reimbursements is a serious healthcare problem facing Medicare-eligibles and military beneficiaries of all ages. Since TRICARE payment rates are tied to Medicare's rates, any reductions adversely impact all military beneficiaries, not just those over age 65.

Finding doctors who accept TRICARE is an enormous problem for the military community - particularly for Guard and Reserve families, retirees, and survivors who live in areas with a small military population. Payment cuts make the situation even worse.

Service members in harm's way should not have to worry about their families' healthcare. There will be long-term negative consequences to retention and readiness if the military TRICARE program cannot provide access to quality care.

Again, I urge you to reverse the 21% Medicare/TRICARE payment cut scheduled for January 2010 by voting for H.R. 3961.

Sincerely,

GORDON R. SULLIVAN
General, USA Retired