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Congresswoman Matsui Votes to Preserve Sacramento Seniors' Access to Their Doctors

Medicare Physician Payment Reform Act Will Fairly Reimburse Physicians for Their Services

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (D-Sacramento) joined her colleagues in the House of Representatives to pass H.R. 3961, the Medicare Physician Payment Reform Act. This important legislation will preserve Sacramento seniors' access to their doctors by permanently reforming the formula Medicare uses to pay physicians. Without enactment of this bill, doctors in Sacramento and across the country will face a 21 percent cut in Medicare reimbursement rates. H.R. 3961 stops these cuts from being implemented and fixes Medicare's flawed payment formula so that physician reimbursement rates more accurately reflect the cost of providing health care in the 21st century.

"I have heard from many Sacramento seniors who risk losing access to their doctors and to the quality care provided in Sacramento if this scheduled reimbursement rate cut were allowed to take place," said Rep. Matsui. "This bill is a comprehensive correction for our seniors and their doctors that staves off a short-term disruption and strengthens the Medicare program for the future as well. Today, we are proactively ensuring that our seniors have reliable access to their doctors, which is particularly important as we continue our fight for affordable health care for all Americans."

"I commend Congresswoman Matsui for voting in favor of the Medicare Physician Payment Reform Act. This legislation is absolutely critical not only for doctors across the Sutter Health system, but for the thousands of Medicare patients these doctors see and treat every single day," said Dr. John Mesic, Chief Medical Officer for Sutter Medical Center in Sacramento. "Without this bill, Sacramento's doctors would be forced to stop seeing Medicare patients altogether because payment rates would be artificially lowered far below the cost of providing needed care. Fortunately for us, Congresswoman Matsui has always recognized that Sacramento's health care providers are an integral part of our community and of our region; her vote to pass H.R. 3961 demonstrates that she understands how important quality health care is

to everyone in Sacramento.”

“As a private-practice physician in Sacramento, I applaud Congresswoman Matsui for supporting the Medicare Physician Payment Reform Act,” said Dr. Margaret Parsons, past-president of the Sierra Sacramento Valley Medical Society. “For many individual doctors in our region, this bill represents the difference between having a stable and solid practice or having to cut back on services to the elderly and the non-elderly alike. Congresswoman Matsui has always been a supporter of Sacramento's doctors and Medicare beneficiaries, and her vote today underscores that commitment to providers and patients.”

To underscore the House Democratic Caucus's commitment to reduce the deficit, the House attached statutory “pay-as-you-go,” or PAYGO, legislation to the Medicare Physician Payment Reform Act before sending it to the Senate. With statutory PAYGO in place, all new tax and entitlement policies must be offset, restoring fiscal discipline and bringing down the fiscal deficits that face our nation. By enacting statutory PAYGO, Democrats are putting an end to the reckless “borrow-and-spend” policies of the Bush Administration and the Republican Congress, and reinstating the principle that led us from record deficits to record surpluses in the Clinton Administration.

“I am proud to support this package and its commitment to fiscal responsibility,” added Matsui. “I will continue to work with my colleagues to ensure that our nation makes smart, fiscally sound investments that improve Sacramentans' quality of life and drive down our deficit at the same time.”

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