

# ASTRO Applauds Self-Referral Legislation

Representative Jackie Speier (D-CA) recently unveiled the "Promoting Integrity in Medicare Act of 2013," which would close the self-referral loophole by excluding radiation therapy, anatomic pathology, advanced imaging and physical therapy from the law's in-office ancillary services exception. The bill is cosponsored by Rep. Jim McDermott (D-Wash.), the top Democrat on the House Ways and Means Health Subcommittee. ASTRO has been working on federal legislation to close the self-referral loophole for radiation therapy.

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a report on August 1st that found that the number of Medicare prostate cancer-related intensity-modulated radiation therapy (IMRT) services performed by self-referring groups increased rapidly, while declining for non-self-referring groups from 2006 to 2010.

"We applaud Reps. Speier and McDermott for their courage in introducing legislation that would finally remove radiation therapy services from the in-office ancillary services exception," said Anthony Zietman, M.D. in an ASTRO press release supporting the bill. "The GAO's report luridly details this flagrant abuse of patient trust."

While the release of the GAO report and PIMA legislation are significant boosts to ASTRO's self-referral advocacy efforts, these developments do not guarantee ultimate success because there is significant opposition in Congress and among other physician specialty groups. ASTRO states that they will continue working with Congress to build support for closing the self-referral loophole as part of a legislative package to stop Medicare physician payment cuts this year.