

## **Congress Freezes Radiation Oncology Payments Under Medicare Physician Fee Schedule**

A bipartisan legislative package of Medicare tweaks picking up many that didn't make it into the year-end spending bill heads to the president's desk after passing the House and Senate on Friday, December 18th. The bill was crafted at the last minute by Sens. Rob Portman (R-OH), John Casey (D-PA), Chuck Schumer (D-NY), Richard Burr (R-NC), Roy Blunt (R-MO), Ron Wyden (D-OR) and Michael Bennet (D-CO).

The bipartisan package of Medicare changes would improve pay for certain radiation therapy services by freezing radiation oncology freestanding center payment rates for 2017 and 2018 at the levels set in the Medicare physician fee schedule for 2016. Specifically, this applies to the current HCPCS G-codes for conventional external beam radiation therapy, IMRT and Image guidance.

The American Society for Radiation Oncology (ASTRO) praised the bill. "ASTRO greatly appreciates bipartisan, bicameral leadership in Congress for their continued efforts to improve our nation's health care system to ensure rates for radiation oncology services provide the stability necessary to avoid any disruptions in critical cancer care," ASTRO said in a statement. "Passage of this legislation will help create a more stable environment during which ASTRO and other radiation oncology stakeholders can continue to work with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services on radiation treatment delivery coding and valuation issues, as well as the development of radiation oncology-specific alternative payment models."