

## **Budget Would Exclude Four Services From In-Office Ancillary Services Exception**

President Obama's fiscal year 2015 Budget released on March 4, 2014, would remove radiation therapy, advanced diagnostic imaging, physical therapy services and, for the first time, anatomic pathology from the In-Office Ancillary Services exception to the self-referral law. The White House Office of Management and Budget estimates that closing the loophole for all services would save \$6 billion over 10 years.

The American Society for Radiation Oncology (ASTRO) met with White House officials in December, urging senior officials to include this proposal in the 2015 budget as they did in the 2014 budget. The budget proposal is timely, as ASTRO continues to urge Congress to close the In-Office Ancillary Services loophole to help pay for the Sustainable Growth Rate repeal legislation introduced earlier this year.

The American College of Radiology (ACR) is in favor of the self-referral inclusion, but is against prior authorization for imaging services, also included in the 2015 budget. "The Sustainable Growth Rate Repeal and Medicare Provider Payment Modernization Act of 2014 would require ordering providers to consult physician-developed appropriateness criteria when prescribing advanced medical imaging studies for Medicare patients. This is a far more effective and efficient policy than blanket prior authorization. Electronic ordering systems, based on these criteria, are compatible with hospital electronic health records systems and are shown to reduce duplicate and unnecessary scanning and associated costs without taking decisions out of doctors' hands or affecting access to care," said Paul Ellenbogen, chair of the ACR Board of Chancellors.