

Rep. Burgess Introduces One-Year Physician Payment Fix Bill

Rep. Michael Burgess (R-TX) introduced on July 20th a one-year Medicare physician payment patch. The Assuring Medicare Stability and Access for Seniors Act of 2012 would prevent all of the looming “physician payment fix” payments from going into effect in 2013, but does not include any offsets to pay for the fix. While there are no offsets in the text of the bill, House rules offsets would be required if the bill moves forward.

Rep. Burgess said that by providing one more year of stability, Congress would take a critical first step towards permanently removing the problematic and inadequate payment system. It also would show seniors, physicians, and other providers that Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) replacement is a legislative priority. A statement from Burgess' office says that because of the potential collision of multiple fiscal deadlines at the end of the year, kicking the SGR problem down the road is dangerous. In order to guarantee access to care in the long term for Medicare beneficiaries, doctors need payment certainty for 2013.

“I have never seen so much progress made on this issue than this year, but Congress must have more time to work with stakeholders on crafting a permanent replacement,” Burgess said in the statement. “While this legislation will provide a one year extension, Congress must continue to work towards a permanent fix that will solve the issue once and for all, and this bill provides that time.”

Industry insiders said that Burgess' bill is really a placeholder, and that by introducing it, Burgess shows he wants to have a say in whatever bill is finally produced.

Committees on both sides of Capitol Hill have been reaching out to stakeholders in recent weeks in search of possible SGR replacement solutions.