



Weekly Update

Doctors for America Weekly Update -- March 2, 2010

Dear Colleagues,

In this week's newsletter, we explore the path forward for comprehensive health reform, which is now back on the media radar in the wake of President Obama's Blair House summit. The policy section also delves into recent developments to stop expected cuts in Medicare physician payment and fix the flawed Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR).

The pressure on Congress to enact comprehensive health reform remains steady because of your efforts. Doctors from around the country have participated in rallies for reform and more letters to the editor surface daily - products of both your hard work and your determination to remind your community and your elected officials that physicians are in favor of health reform legislation.

Feeling like your concerns about the broken system aren't really being heard by Congress? Come show your support in person in Washington, D.C., at the March 22nd Health Professionals March ([www.healthmarch.org](http://healthmarch.org) <<http://healthmarch.org>>). Join us as we march to ensure that the Congress acts quickly to enact comprehensive legislation. Details below.

***Physicians Making A Difference: ***

Highlights from the last two weeks

--Doctors for America's first ad

<http://drsforamerica.org/pressupload/releases/625522DFA_rollcall_v2.pdf> was published in the Capitol Hill newspaper, RollCall. The ad was paid for entirely by your donations and sent a clear message, Reform Can't Wait.

--Dr. Norris Kamo (MA) was featured in a local tv news report about a health care reform rally

<<http://www.necn.com/02/20/10/Rallying-for-universal-health-care/landing.html?blockID=183790&feedID=4215>> .

--Six Doctors for America (WA) from Washington State met with Representative Jim McDermott on Feb. 18, a child psychiatrist by training who has been working as a legislator the past 22 years fighting for health care reform.

--Dr. Basim Khan (CA), a resident at San Francisco General Hospital and UCSF spoke at a rally on February 18th.

--Dr. Zahid Imran (LA) and Louisiana Doctors for America protested outside Representative Dr. Bill Cassidy's office <<http://www.2theadvocate.com/news/84754202.html>> for health care reform. Their



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effort made local news and got them an in person meeting with the Congressman, a physician who has been vocally against reform.

--Dr. Owen Linder's (FL) letter to the editor about the need for a health care reality check in Washington <<http://www.tampabay.com/opinion/letters/article1062136.ece>> was published in the Tampa Bay newspaper.

--Dr. Krishnan Narasimhan (MD) spoke at a rally surrounding "Melanie's March," a march from Philadelphia to Washington DC by health reform advocates. --Last Wednesday, at the culmination of "Melanie's March" and on the eve of the President's summit, Doctors for America members (DC) rallied at Union Station with Senator Harry Reid and others.

--Doctors across the country pitched in on Wednesday in a virtual march by contacting Congress alongside other supporters of reform who made over 1 million contacts to Congress in the final day of "Melanie's March."

--Dr. Zaneb Beams (MD) and others visited Senators Mikulski and Cardin in their Washington, DC Senate offices last Wednesday as well.

--Charlie Preston and Anand Narayan (MD) visited Senator Mikulski's local Baltimore office last week, too, to encourage her to continue to fight hard for health reform legislation.

--Maryland Doctors for America, led by Charlie Preston and Alejandro Necochea, joined DFA members Shiv Gandhi, Meghana Desale, Geoff Lynn, Amir Mohareb, and others for an organizational meeting in Baltimore.

--Dr. Mandy Krauthamer Cohen (DC) was filmed commenting on the President's Blair House summit <<http://drsforamerica.org/summit.php>> along with Health policy expert Judy Feder last Thursday as a part of Doctor's for America's watch party.

--Dr. Cohen was also interviewed on the "Real New Network" along with California Nurses Association spokesperson Donna Smith last week to talk about "What happened to Health Care Reform."

<http://therealnews.com/t2/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=31&Itemid=74&jumival=4850>

--Dr. Hal Braun (MT) and others letter to the editor about why providers are frustrated with Congress and want reform <http://www.missoulian.com/news/opinion/columnists/article_0872a4ba-1d78-11df-bc6f-001cc4c03286.html> , urging their legislators to pass health reform was published in the Missoulian.



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--Samreen Hasan's (WI) letter to the editor urging Congress to cross the finish line http://trib.com/news/opinion/mailbag/article_3435ae72-f114-50e7-8ad5-5460202e387b.html and pass reform was published in the Caspar Star Tribune.

--Dr. Vivek Murthy (MA) spoke about why health reform is vital to students <http://www.google.com/url?sa=X&q=http://www.dailyfreepress.com/news/health-care-reform-vital-for-students-speaker-says-1.2175642&ct=ga&cd=g1CeVHpZXM&usg=AFQjCNFiEluhkJWO2vMup88eLXfjXB4ijA> and why each person's advocacy matters at a screening of the PBS documentary "Sick Around America" organized by MIT and Smith students.

--Dr. Murthy also met with his Congressman Barney Frank, who urged people across the country to keep up the pressure on their members of Congress.

What you can do this week

Tell a friend about the March 22nd Health Professionals March

Don't forget to RSVP - even if it's to be there in spirit - to march alongside fellow Doctors for America members at the Medical Professionals Healthcare Reform March on March 22, 2010 in Washington, D.C.

Share this link with your friends, and join the hundreds of health professionals who will march the message to Capitol Hill in just a few short weeks.

Learn more about the march here: <http://healthmarch.org/?ref=dfa>

*3 Top Stories *

Lessons from the Health Care Summit <http://healthaffairs.org/blog/2010/03/01/lessons-from-the-health-care-summit/#more-4012> - Health Affairs (blog), Uwe Reinhardt

The Cost of Doing Nothing on Health Care <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/28/weekinreview/28abelson.html?ref=health> - NYT Week in Review

Risking Big Changes with Small Reforms <http://healthcarereform.nejm.org/?p=2934&query=home> - NEJM, Stuart Butler

Key Policy Developments

1. After the Presidential Summit: Moving Forward



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Today begins a critical period in the push toward a comprehensive health reform overhaul. After Thursday's Blair House summit, Congressional leadership is poised to move forward despite lack of consensus from both sides of the aisle. While President Obama is expected to announce his preferred legislative mechanism for moving the bill forward this week, all signs continue to point to a strategy where the House would pass the health bill approved in December by the Senate. Both chambers would then approve a separate package of changes using budget reconciliation.

Here's how the use of reconciliation might play out:

Step 1: House passage of the Senate version of the health reform bill.

On ABC's "This Week," House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) said she is confident she will be able to get the votes needed to pass the health reform legislation in the House - even if it threatens the re-election prospects of some members of her party. Specific legislative language that will make changes to the Senate bill designed to appeal to House lawmakers will be released later this week.

Sticking points in the House remain similar to those seen during November's House debate on health reform: insurance coverage of abortion and a general unease among centrist Democrats with the scope and cost of the legislation. Though the House health reform bill received 220 votes in November, Democrats have lost four supporters of the bill in the interval due to a myriad of causes. Rep. Joseph Cao (R-LA) says he no longer supports it, Rep. John Murtha (D-PA) passed away and Reps. Robert Wexler (D-FL) and Neil Abercrombie (D-FL) resigned to focus on other opportunities.

Step 2: Passing Changes through Budget Reconciliation.

Reconciliation continues to be attacked as everything from "cataclysmic" to a "trick" to push a bill through Congress. However, every president since Jimmy Carter has used reconciliation to pass legislation. Since 1981, Republican presidents have signed 14 of the 19 reconciliation bills into law, including two tax cuts in the George W. Bush administration that did not reduce the deficit, which the reconciliation rules explicitly require. It was a Republican Congress that used reconciliation in 1996 to pass a sweeping overhaul of the welfare reform system, proposed by Democratic President Bill Clinton.

For more on the Road Ahead: Pelosi's Challenge - Corraling Votes for a Health Bill, NYT:
<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/28/us/politics/28health.html>

Watch a video about the hurdles and politics surrounding the way forward:
<http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/video/jake-tapper-obamas-health-care-hurdles-9975509?&clipId=9975509&playlistId=-1&cid=siteplayer>

2. With a Fix Stalled in Congress, SGR Cuts Move Forward



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Retiring Sen. Jim Bunning (R-KY) not only held up extension of jobless benefits and COBRA coverage with his parliamentary objections at the end of last week's Senate session. He also held up passage of a provision to stop the 21% Medicare payment cut to physicians that went into effect yesterday.

CMS has stated they will keep the payment cuts from going into effect for another ten days while the Senate attempts to act on an SGR patch quickly. As of today, it was unclear which legislative vehicle Congress intended to use, but Senate leaders made clear it was a top priority. The Senate will likely pass a 30-day patch to align with the House provision passed last week. Either way, however, Congress hasn't heard the last of the debate over the SGR fix.

For more on the SGR Fix: Congress Cuts Medicare Payouts; Medicare Says 'Oh, No You Don't' - Newsweek (blog): <http://blog.newsweek.com/blogs/thegaggle/archive/2010/03/01/congress-cuts-medicare-payouts-medicare-says-oh-no-you-don-t.aspx>

"Make It Stop: Fixing the SGR for Good" on the "Wonk Room" Blog by Dr. Mandy Cohen
<http://wonkroom.thinkprogress.org/2010/03/01/sgr-bunning/>

Thank you to those of you who emailed us to let us know what you've been up to. Your e-mails provide the content for the "Physicians Making a Difference" section.

Thank you, also, for your feedback. Let us know how we can improve [this newsletter](http://drsforamerica.org/poll/newsletter.php). Remember, you can share this newsletter via facebook [this link](http://bit.ly/44stwW), twitter [this link](http://bit.ly/1pQMnw), or linkedIn [this link](http://bit.ly/31WS9M). You can also download this newsletter as a PDF [this link](http://drsforamerica.org/documents/weeklyupdates/healthreformupdate03022010.pdf).

Sincerely,

Mandy, Megan, Ali, and the Doctors for America Team

-- Doctors for America is a grassroots group of over 16,000 physicians and medical students in all 50 states. Together we are committed to building a health system that works better for us and better for our patients. To stop receiving these messages, please click here: drsforamerica.org/cgi-bin/unsubscribe.pl?id=. To contact us please e-mail info@drsforamerica.org