

Open Letter to Congress

Dear Members of Congress:

I'm writing today on behalf of nearly 45,000 physicians and medical student members of the Texas Medical Association (TMA) to ask for swift action to stop the implosion of our Medicare system. By failing to act, Congress is jeopardizing access to care for the millions of senior citizens, people with disabilities, and military families who depend on Medicare.

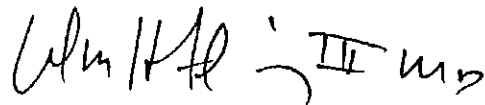
Congress recently enacted legislation with the goal of providing better health care access for most Americans. However, the new health law fails to fix a fundamental problem with the existing payment formula for Medicare, the Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR). TMA's message to Congress for the past year on health system reform is "Keep what's good in our health care system and fix only what's wrong." We ask Congress to continue its work and fix the basic foundation of Medicare.

Every year for a decade, physicians and other providers have faced steep cuts that jeopardize our ability to care for our patients. You and your colleagues have recognized this glaring problem — this gaping wound in our health care system — but have been willing to address it only with Band-Aids. This year alone, Congress passed two Band-Aids instead of coming up with a permanent solution. We need more than Band-Aids. We need more than sutures. We need a complete transplant. You created this disease, and only you can cure it.

On behalf of our patients and ourselves, we implore that you fix Medicare now. Many of the provisions of the new health reforms are predicated on Medicare. You cannot build a new a new health care system on top of the crumbling Medicare foundation. You must stabilize Medicare today and ensure a firm foundation for future generations of patients.

It's time for a permanent Medicare fix.

Sincerely,



William H. Fleming III, MD
President
Texas Medical Association