

Washington, July 27 – In an email from the President of the American College of Physicians (ACP), David C. Dale, MD, FACP, urged all 124,000 physician members and students to write letters of support to Congress in favor of the Children’s Health and Medicare Protection (CHAMP) Act of 2007 (H.R. 3162). The all-member email states:

Dear ACP Member:

Both chambers of Congress are quickly proceeding with health care legislation: H.R. 3162, the “Children’s Health and Medicare Protection (CHAMP) Act”, **a bill to reauthorize the State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) and to avert Medicare physician payment cuts.** In the House, the Committee on Ways & Means voted out the bill early Friday, July 27th and the bill is currently being debated in the Committee on Energy & Commerce. It is expected to be voted on before the full House later next week (August 2-3).

The CHAMP Act is the only bill moving forward in Congress that would avert a 10 percent Medicare physician payment cut on January 1, 2008. The CHAMP Act will (1) re-authorize and expand SCHIP; and (2) provide positive Medicare physician payment updates of 0.5 percent each of the next two years to avert a pending 10 percent payment cut scheduled for January 2008 and an estimated 5 percent cut in 2009.

The bill also includes many other changes supported by ACP, including: reducing geographic inequities in payments; providing payment incentives for care coordination by internists through an expanded Medicare pilot of *the Patient-Centered Medical Home*, creating a process to correct misvalued payments, and funding objective research on the comparative effectiveness of different medical treatments. (No bill is perfect, of course, and ACP will work with Congress to fix any specific provisions that need improvement. We also would have preferred higher updates, and we will need to work with Congress to get legislation enacted before 2010 to prevent another round of Medicare cuts. Overall, though, the bill deserves ACP’s strong support and is the best vehicle for averting the 10 percent Medicare cut).

Congress’ budget rules require that the physician payment increases and the SCHIP expansion be paid for by revenue increases or savings in other programs. **The CHAMP bill is paid for by increases in the federal tax on tobacco and redistribution of unfair and costly overpayments to Medicare Advantage plans.** (Currently, Medicare Advantage private insurance plans are paid, on average, 12 percent more than fee-for-service physicians). **Members of Congress are being urged by “big tobacco” and the insurance industry to vote “no” on the CHAMP Act. As a result, the votes within the House committees and on the floor are expected to be extremely close—a few votes one way or the other will decide its fate--so Representatives need to hear from internists *now* about why they should vote “yes” on The CHAMP Act.**

Sincerely,
David C. Dale, MD, FACP
President

