



T H E M I L I T A R Y C O A L I T I O N

201 North Washington Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314
(703) 838-8113

March 28, 2008

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Madam Speaker:

The Military Coalition (TMC), a consortium of nationally prominent uniformed service and veterans organizations, representing more than 5.5 million members plus their families and survivors, is writing to urge your support to reverse the planned 10.6% reduction in the Medicare and military TRICARE physician payment rates set to occur in July 2008 and the additional 5.4% cut planned for January 2009.

Declining participation of providers due to low reimbursements is one of the most serious healthcare problems facing Medicare-eligible and uniformed service beneficiaries of all ages. This is particularly problematic for over 2 million TRICARE Standard and 65,000 TRICARE Reserve Select users. This includes Guard and Reserve families, retirees, and survivors who live in areas where there isn't a large military population or military hospital.

With the implementation of TRICARE for Life (TFL) in 2001, TRICARE became a second payer to Medicare for uniformed service retirees. Although TFL has worked well, real and threatened cuts in the level of Medicare reimbursements have caused many providers to stop accepting new Medicare and TRICARE patients. Additionally, since TRICARE payment rates are tied to Medicare's rates, any such reductions will deter significantly more doctors from seeing any uniformed service beneficiaries – not just those over age 65.

When our service members are sent in harm's way, the last thing they should have to worry about is whether their families will be able to find a TRICARE doctor, or whether their current doctor will stop seeing TRICARE patients. There will be long-term negative consequences to retention and readiness if the military TRICARE program can't provide access to quality care. We just can't let that happen.

Please do all you can to ensure Congress replaces the Medicare/TRICARE rate cuts with positive updates for at least the next 18 months by supporting S. 2785, the Save Medicare Act of 2008. This would give Congress the flexibility to begin working on a long-term solution to the broken payment system.

Sincerely,

The Military Coalition
(signatures enclosed)

Air Force Association
Air Force Sergeants Association
Air Force Women Officers Associated
American Logistics Association
Army Aviation Association of America
Association of Military Surgeons of the United States
Association of the United States Army
Chief Warrant Officer and Warrant Officer Association, U.S. Coast Guard
Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service, Inc.
Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States
Fleet Reserve Association
Gold Star Wives of America, Inc.
Jewish War Veterans of the United States of America
Marine Corps League
Marine Corps Reserve Association
Military Chaplains Association of the United States of America
Military Officers Association of America
Military Order of the Purple Heart
National Association for Uniformed Services
National Guard Association of the United States
National Military Family Association
National Order of Battlefield Commissions
Naval Reserve Association
Navy League of the United States
Non Commissioned Officers Association
Reserve Officers Association
The Retired Enlisted Association
United States Army Warrant Officers Association
United States Coast Guard Chief Petty Officers Association
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States
Veterans' Widows International Network