

# Wyoming seniors again face Medicare physician access crisis: Congress must act now on a long-term solution

- Wyoming seniors can face significant challenges obtaining access to physicians. These challenges will get much worse unless Congress acts very soon to permanently prevent steep cuts in Medicare payment rates. At just 13 practicing physicians per 1,000 Medicare beneficiaries, Wyoming is well below the national average. One in five Wyoming residents is living in a primary care shortage area, and 31 percent of the state's Medicare beneficiaries are living below 150 percent of the federal poverty level.
- On January 1, 2013, Wyoming Medicare physician services face an across-the-board pay cut of about 30 percent, due to a flawed payment formula, the Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR), created by Congress.
- Congress needs to avert these cuts and eliminate the formula that leads to this annual crisis. SGR legislation would prevent a loss of \$30 million annually for the care of elderly and disabled patients in Wyoming. On average, a cut of this magnitude will reduce 2013 practice revenues by \$22,000 per Wyoming physician, which will worsen access problems and make it extremely difficult to pay for office space and other expenses and avoid staff layoffs.
- 4,876 employees of medical practices, 79,492 Medicare patients and 22,935 Tricare patients in Wyoming will be helped by the legislation that averts these cuts.
- More than half – 51 percent – of Wyoming's practicing physicians are over 50, an age at which surveys have shown many physicians consider reducing their patient care activities.

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