



**MEDICAL COALITION INCREASES PRESSURE ON CONGRESS FOR A
PERMANENT MEDICARE PHYSICIAN PAY FIX
FEBRUARY, 2012**

The American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO), along with a coalition of nearly seventy (70) national and state medical associations, is increasing pressure on Congress for a permanent Medicare physician pay fix. The coalition is stressing that now is the time to permanently repeal Medicare's sustainable growth rate formula (SGR). The joint U.S. House and Senate committee created to extend the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2011 met for the first time on Tuesday, January 24, 2012, to consider extending the legislation, which provided a two-month SGR fix that expires February 29, 2012.

The medical associations contend that savings in the Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) fund, resulting from reduced spending for the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, could be used to pay for a full SGR repeal. While some Republican members of Congress have criticized using OCO savings as a budget "gimmick," the associations contend that using the savings to pay for the SGR repeal is a viable option.

Senate Democratic leaders are indicating a 10-month Medicare physician pay fix is likely, pushing the issue into a lame-duck session after the November, 2012, elections. The costs to permanently repeal the SGR increases with each "temporary" fix.

Ophthalmologists, in 2011, sent more than 8,500 letters urging members of Congress to fix the Medicare physician pay issue.