

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 109

BY SENATOR HEITMEIER

A RESOLUTION

To commend the United States Congress on the passage of bipartisan legislation to permanently set the payment amounts that Medicare pays for physician services, known as the doc fix.

WHEREAS, the term "doc fix" refers to the formula the federal government uses to pay physicians who treat patients covered by Medicare, who pay less than they would otherwise to see a physician and the federal government makes up the difference and pays the physician an amount determined by Congress; and

WHEREAS, in 1997, Congress cut payments to physicians who treat patients enrolled in Medicare in order to help balance the federal budget; and

WHEREAS, while Congress had considered cutting the dollars to physicians treating Medicare patients, but did not have the collective will to carry it through, being concerned that some physicians might not continue to treat Medicare patients at a reduced rate, and the cut was postponed until a future date; and

WHEREAS, over the last eighteen years Congress has postponed the cut seventeen times and the cut has become a possible twenty percent reduction in payments if the attempt to postpone the cuts failed during this Congress; and

WHEREAS, with the current doc fix extension set to expire on March 31, 2015, Congress may consider the need for structural reforms to Medicare generally, not merely a postponement of the cut for another year; and

WHEREAS, with the unconscionable cut of more than twenty percent looming without the annual doc fix extension in April, Congress agreed to begin broader structural changes to Medicare, ending the doc fix shell game permanently; and

WHEREAS, despite the reality that healthcare is expensive and that the annual re-visiting of the doc fix formula of paying physicians was, at least, a bad way to govern, a bipartisan solution proved attainable even in a time when merely entertaining an idea from the other side of the aisle is often unthinkable; and

WHEREAS, with the reality that one political party leads both houses of Congress and the other holds the presidency, true bipartisanship is the only path to successfully attacking any of the country's issues, yet that bipartisanship is noticeably absent in the discussion of most of those issues; and

WHEREAS, while partisan differences have been more likely to win the day, the ability to craft a bipartisan doc fix solution requires the leadership of both political parties in both houses to focus on solutions rather than differences, and for that both the leadership and the members of Congress as a whole should be heartily congratulated; and

WHEREAS, in reaching agreement on the end to the doc fix extensions, Congress has begun the daunting task of reforming and restructuring America's entitlement programs, a beginning worthy of note and of acclaim.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby commend the United States Congress on the passage of bipartisan legislation to permanently set the payment amounts that Medicare pays for physician services, known as the doc fix.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the presiding officers of the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Congress of the United States of America and to each member of the Louisiana congressional delegation.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE