

Passage of Midwifery Legislation Put Off for Six Months
ACNM Encourages Members to Ask Senators to Sign onto Medicare Bill
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As a last resort before the holiday break, Congress enacted a stripped-down version of the Medicare bill. The midwifery provision now depends on the sustained support of ACNM members, because the Medicare bill will come before Congress again before June 30, 2008. In August of 2007, midwives celebrated as the House passed a provision in the Children's Health and Medicare Protection Act (CHAMP) that would increase the rate of reimbursement for midwifery services by 35%. But on December 18th, the U.S. Senate resorted to passing a "bare bones" version of the bill, which excluded the midwife-supported provision "Midwifery Care Access and Reimbursement Equity Act of 2007" (S.507). The House followed suit, passing the stripped-down version of the bill on December 19, 2008, which President George Bush signed into law in late December. Officially named "The Medicare, Medicaid, and SCHIP Extension Act" (S.2499), the bill provides a six month delay to a 10% health professional fee cut under the Medicare program and extends the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) through March 2009.

While ACNM is disappointed that Congress' temporary fix excludes the midwifery provision, it was a necessary move. If action was delayed until after the holidays, important legislation that provides health care to many children and seniors would have expired on January 1, 2008.

Key Players Remain Onboard

The battle for equitable midwifery reimbursement is far from over. ACNM continues to receive strong support from influential legislators. As of March 12th, the midwifery provision boasts the support of 22 senators, ten of whom are members of the Senate Finance Committee, a powerful committee with jurisdiction over the Medicare program. The Government Affairs Committee has been instrumental in winning the support of key legislators. Over the next few months, ACNM plans to continue putting pressure on members of Congress to vote "yes" when the midwifery provision comes back to the table before the end of June.

Under current legislation, CNMs receive just 65% of the Medicare fee for their services. The current reimbursement level reduces access to care among vulnerable populations as many Medicaid and private health plans follow Medicare fee schedules. ACNM is continuing to work for the recognition of CMs to bill for services under Medicare, as contained in H.R. 864/S.507. To do that, ACNM is working with senators from New York, New Jersey, and Rhode Island to gain support for including the CM provision in the final legislation.

Take Action!

As an ACNM member, we encourage you to continue working for the midwifery provision. Here's what you can do to help this important piece of legislation become a reality:

- Visit <http://capwiz.com/acnm/issues/bills> and click on S.507 to see if your senator supports the provision.
- Write a letter to your legislators, urging them to support the midwifery provision. Visit <http://capwiz.com/acnm/home/>, and click on "Take Action!"
- Help fund ACNM's political efforts by donating to the Midwives Political Action Committee (Midwives-PAC). Visit http://www.midwife.org/midwives_pac.cfm, to learn more.