

Earlier this week, I had the opportunity to question Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius about the lack of a serious proposal from the Obama administration to reform Medicare's payments to physicians. While Congress recently voted to delay a 27% cut to physician payments through the end of this year, scheduled cuts in the future continue to threaten seniors' access to physician care. It is essential to develop a permanent solution by replacing the broken Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) formula with a new system for reimbursing physicians. The President's budget offers lip service to the idea of reforming the physician payment system but proposes to add the cost of reform to the deficit, an idea that has already been rejected by the Democrat-controlled Senate and would never pass the House.

Unfortunately, Secretary Sebelius did not even mention preventing these cuts in her lengthy prepared statement. When I asked her about the omission, she did at least express interest in working on a long-term solution but suggested that Congress should prevent cuts to physician payments without finding equivalent savings elsewhere in Medicare. This approach would only add to the financial burden that threatens Medicare's future. I will continue to call upon the Obama Administration to come to the table with a serious proposal to preserve seniors' access to doctors and to save and strengthen Medicare for future generations.