WASHINGTON – Seniors and their physicians moved a step closer to permanent repeal of the broken Medicare physician payment formula this week with legislation (S. 1776) under consideration in the Senate that creates a path to repeal. To emphasize this essential element of health reform, the American Medical Association (AMA) kicks-off its Medicare campaign today with new television ads that will begin airing in markets nationwide.

The new TV spot features seniors and their physicians, while a voiceover says “every year Congress must make a temporary fix to the Medicare payment plan so seniors can keep their doctor and the care they depend on.” The ad calls on the Senate to protect the Medicare security and stability seniors have earned by repealing the flawed Medicare physician payment formula. It urges people to call their Senators to support S. 1776. View the new ad online at the AMA’s health reform Web site http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/health-system-reform/medicare-physicians-fairness-act.shtml.

“There is widespread agreement that Medicare physician cuts will harm seniors’ access and choice of physician,” said AMA President J. James Rohack, M.D. “Congress can no longer put a band-aid on the problem. As we undertake an historic effort to improve the heath system, it’s time for permanent repeal of the Medicare physician payment formula.”

“The 2009 Medicare Trustees’ report projects payment cuts to physicians of about 40 percent over the next five years – forcing physicians to make tough decisions,” said Dr. Rohack. “Nearly 90 percent of people 50 and over are concerned that the current Medicare physician payment formula threatens their access to care. In just two years, the first wave of baby boomers will reach Medicare age.”

In addition to Senator Stabenow’s bill that creates a path to reform in the Senate, permanent repeal is included in the House health reform bill. Replacing the broken Medicare physician payment formula with one that better reflects the costs and practice of 21st century medical care will help physicians increase care coordination, reduce costly hospital admissions and adopt health information technology and quality reporting.

“It’s essential that Congress preserve the security and stability of Medicare through permanent repeal of the formula this year,” said Dr. Rohack. “In addition to the new television ads, the AMA will activate its grassroots network of patients and physicians to reach out to their members of Congress. Seniors who rely on Medicare need continued
access and choice of physician, so we’re calling on Congress to fix the problem once and for all this year.”

Patients and physicians can get involved in the AMA’s Patients Action Network online at www.patientsactionnetwork.org and learn more about the issues at www.hsreform.org.

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For more information, contact AMA Media Relations:

Brenda Craine, Director
202-789-7447
brenda.craine@ama-assn.org

Katherine Hatwell, Senior Public Information Officer
202-789-7419
katherine.hatwell@ama-assn.org

About the American Medical Association
The American Medical Association helps doctors help patients by uniting physicians nationwide to work on the most important professional and public health issues. Working together, the AMA’s quarter of a million physician and medical student members are playing an active role in shaping the future of medicine. For more information on the AMA, please visit www.ama-assn.org. Follow AMA on Twitter at https://twitter.com/AmerMedicalAssn