



J. James Rohack MD, President

January 26, 2010

Dear President Obama and Members of Congress:

The American Medical Association (AMA) encourages Members of Congress and the Obama Administration to continue efforts to enact meaningful health system reform this year.

While the Senate election in Massachusetts altered the political landscape, the issues that created the pressure to enact reforms must still be addressed. Far too many Americans are at risk of living sicker and dying younger because they lack access to affordable health insurance. Even those who are currently insured risk losing their coverage or exhausting their benefits if they become sick or lose their jobs. Escalating health insurance premiums are straining the budgets of consumers, employers and governments. Investments are needed to improve decision-making tools, advance quality improvement and promote wellness and prevention. Physicians and patients are drowning in unnecessarily complicated paperwork and procedures that increase overhead and drive up costs.

We will continue to work with Congress and the Administration to support initiatives that reflect long-standing AMA policy, developed before the start of the 111th Congress, to address eight critical elements of health system reform:

- Provide health insurance coverage for all Americans.
- Enact health insurance market reforms that expand choice of affordable coverage and eliminate denials for pre-existing conditions.
- Assure that health care decisions are made by patients and their physicians, not insurance companies or government officials. Patients and their physicians should also have the right to privately contract without penalty.
- Provide investments and incentives for quality improvement, prevention, and wellness initiatives.
- Repeal the Medicare physician payment formula that will trigger steep cuts and threaten seniors' access to care.
- Implement medical liability reforms to reduce the cost of defensive medicine.
- Streamline and standardize insurance claims processing requirements to eliminate unnecessary costs and administrative burdens.
- Modify antitrust enforcement policies to empower physicians to implement clinical integration and quality improvement initiatives.

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We believe that enacting these policies will build a foundation for a stronger, better performing health care system, improve access to affordable, high-quality care, and reduce unnecessary costs. The AMA looks forward to working with all Members of Congress and the Administration to make health system reform a reality.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Rohack". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jim" and last name "Rohack" clearly distinguishable.

J. James Rohack, MD