

## **AMA House of Delegates Reaffirms Commitment to Health System Reform at Interim Meeting**

The AMA House of Delegates debated health system reform at the AMA interim meeting from November 7-10, 2009 in Houston, Texas. Despite resolutions from some state and national specialty societies in opposition to the AMA's support of H.R. 3200 and H.R. 3962, the AMA House reaffirmed its position in support of health system reform through a vehicle known as "Substitute Resolution 203."

At last week's meeting in Houston, the AMA reaffirmed its endorsement of H.R. 3962, the *Affordable Health Care for America Act* and H.R. 3961, the *Medicare Physicians Payment Reform Act*. The following state and national medical societies submitted a resolution seeking to withdraw the AMA's support of these bills including Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, D.C., Georgia, Kansas, Louisiana, New Jersey, South Carolina, the American Academy of Facial Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery, the American Association of Neurological Surgeons, and the American Society of General Surgeons.

AMA President J. James Rohack, M.D. told the delegates, "H.R. 3962 is not the perfect bill, and we will continue to advocate for changes that help make the system better for patients and physicians as the legislative process continues." "We must pass H.R. 3961 as an essential element of health reform and to fulfill Congress' obligations to current and future Medicare patients," said Dr. Rohack.

You can find more information about the AMA's actions on health system reform in Houston last week, including the text of Substitute Resolution 203, on the web at: <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/health-system-reform/ama-continues-hsr-commitment.shtml>.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) has stated that he may bring health care reform up for debate in the Senate as early as this week.

In the House, a vote is expected this week on H.R. 3961, the "Medicare Physician Payment Reform Act of 2009". This critical piece of legislation would permanently repeal the Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) formula that calls for annual cuts in Medicare physician payments and replace it with a new, more rational payment system. Without a fix to the formula, Medicare payments will be reduced by more than 21 percent on Jan 1, 2010. It is important that physicians call the offices of Congressman Mike Michaud and Congresswoman Chellie Pingree and ask for their vote on H.R. 3961. You may call 800-833-6354, the AMA Physician Grassroots Hotline, to be directly connected with either office.