An Open Letter to the United States Senate:
Don’t Deceive Taxpayers by Hiding Health Care Reform Costs!

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the millions of members represented by the undersigned groups, we urge you to oppose S. 1776, the “Medicare Physician Fairness Act,” and its appalling and dishonest attempt to mask the tremendous costs health care reform will impose upon American families and businesses. Considering the enormity and complexity of our health care system, the American people deserve honesty and transparency in a reform debate. This kind of legislative scheming fails to live up to the high standards to which this Congress claims to aspire.

Introduced by Senator Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), S. 1776 would raise reimbursements for physicians through Medicare to the tune of $247 billion over 10 years. While this so-called “doc fix” has merit under the right circumstances as a means of preventing further erosion of physician participation in the Medicare program, this legislation contains no spending reductions elsewhere to offset its considerable cost. It would require that the Senate vote to waive its own budget rules, intended to protect taxpayers, and would represent a violation of “PAYGO” rules in the House as well. Perhaps more importantly, it serves as a deceptive measure to reduce the perceived cost of various plans for comprehensive health care overhaul.

Earlier this month, one such piece of legislation introduced by Finance Committee Chairman Senator Max Baucus (D-MT) received a 10-year cost estimate from the Congressional Budget Office of $829 billion. It achieved a score more than $200 billion lower than the $1.042 trillion plan drafted by the late Senator Ted Kennedy (D-MA) and the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee in part by reducing physician reimbursements through Medicare. By engineering a $247 billion reversal of part of the Baucus bill in separate legislation, it is clear that some leaders in Congress had no intent of allowing those reductions to take effect.

If Congress seeks a “doc fix,” it should draft it into comprehensive health care reform legislation and allow it to be debated in proper context. Splitting higher reimbursements into a separate piece of legislation can only be an underhanded bait-and-switch attempt to deceive an American public that deserves better.

Sincerely,
The Undersigned
Duane Parde
President
National Taxpayers Union

Jim Martin
President
60 Plus Association

George Watson, D.O.
President
Association of American Physicians and Surgeons

Susan A. Carleson
Chairman, CEO, and Treasurer
The American Civil Rights Union

Laurence Socci
President
Americans for Conservative Values

Tim Phillips
President
Americans for Prosperity

Grover Norquist
President
Americans for Tax Reform

Sandra Fabry
Executive Director
Center for Fiscal Accountability

Chris Chocola
President
Club for Growth

Wendy Wright
President
Concerned Women for America

Rick Scott
Conservatives for Patients Rights

Brian McManus
Director of Federal Affairs
Council for Affordable Health Insurance

Thomas A. Schatz
President
Council for Citizens Against Government Waste
Matt Kibbe
President and CEO
FreedomWorks

John Tillman
CEO
Illinois Policy Institute

Michelle D. Bernard
President and CEO
Independent Women’s Voice

Colin A. Hanna
President
Let Freedom Ring

Forest Thigpen
President
Mississippi Center for Public Policy

Jim Stergios
Executive Director
Pioneer Institute (MA)

John McCollister
Executive Director
Platte Institute for Economic Research (NE)