



HR0560

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, In 2005, the Medicare Rights Center (MRC) published "Medicare: A National Treasure for Forty Years"; the Medicare program was created as part of the Social Security Amendments of 1965, and the program will celebrate its 44th anniversary on July 30, 2009; and

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WHEREAS, The MRC's findings are still valid, to wit: the Medicare program has become a national treasure, reflecting the nation's commitment to the health and independence of older Americans and Americans with disabilities by providing health care coverage to 45 million people; and

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WHEREAS, The original design of the Medicare program - its universality, shared risk, simplicity and dependability - created the foundation for its 44 years of success; Medicare's universal nature ensures that virtually all older Americans and many people with disabilities receive the health care they need, while Medicare pools risk in order to share the financial burdens of illness across healthy and sick individuals and affluent and low-income families; for 44 years, Medicare has guaranteed coverage for a defined set of benefits at a uniform and predictable cost to all seniors and to people with disabilities regardless of their income, health status, or where they live and has dramatically improved the quality of

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1 life for millions of individuals; and

2 WHEREAS, Among the most important reasons to celebrate the
3 past 44 years of Medicare are: (1) guaranteed access to care
4 for people with Medicare; (2) improved quality of life for
5 older Americans and people with disabilities; (3)
6 administrative efficiency and cost containment; (4) critical
7 support for America's healthcare system; and (5) guaranteed
8 benefits and choice of providers; and

9 WHEREAS, Prior to Medicare, only half of older adults had
10 health insurance; private insurers were unable or unwilling to
11 provide comprehensive, affordable health care coverage to the
12 growing aged population, who were either too old or too sick
13 and therefore too high an insurance risk; through the guarantee
14 of Medicare coverage, the federal government established
15 protections for all people with Medicare that ensure that
16 everyone - including those battling costly illnesses - have
17 access to covered services; and

18 WHEREAS, Medicare is the second largest source of federal
19 spending for HIV care and treatment, and approximately one out
20 of every five HIV-positive Americans receiving regular medical
21 care depends, at least in part, on the Medicare program; and

22 WHEREAS, Medicare has also improved access to care in other

1 ways; for example, Medicare was, and continues to be,
2 instrumental in reducing disparities in access and coverage for
3 racial and ethnic minority groups; and

4 WHEREAS, A 2001 survey demonstrates that people with
5 Medicare are generally more satisfied with their health care
6 than are persons under age 65 who are covered by private
7 insurance; people with Medicare report fewer problems getting
8 access to care, greater confidence about their access, and
9 fewer instances of financial hardship as a result of medical
10 bills; Medicare creates access to health care across many
11 dimensions: access to physician services; access to necessary
12 care; and reduced financial barriers to care; older Americans
13 with Medicare experience comparatively fewer financial
14 barriers to care; and

15 WHEREAS, By the year 2030, 20 percent of the U.S.
16 population - 77 million people - will be eligible for Medicare,
17 compared to the 14 percent of Americans who are
18 Medicare-eligible today; while Medicare gives all Americans a
19 sense of security knowing their parents, grandparents, friends
20 and neighbors can access the health care they need, before long
21 the next generation of Americans will need to count on Medicare
22 too; and

23 WHEREAS, Thanks to Medicare, millions of Americans are able

1 to afford life-saving care, but Medicare also improves the
2 quality of life for older Americans in other ways; for example,
3 Medicare is also a social safety net that has lifted millions
4 of people out of poverty; in fact, since Medicare was created
5 in 1965, poverty among the elderly has been reduced by nearly
6 two-thirds; by financing health care services, Medicare
7 safeguards beneficiaries and their families from the ruinous
8 costs of medical treatments and prevents individuals from
9 spending unmanageable proportions of their incomes on medical
10 care or being pushed into poverty by their medical bills; in
11 addition, life expectancy has increased by three years and more
12 people are living past the age of 85 than ever before, while
13 disability rates among the elderly are decreasing; with
14 improvements in Medicare coverage for preventive services,
15 such as breast and prostate cancer screening, and advances in
16 care management for people with chronic conditions, further
17 reductions in morbidity and disability can be expected; and

18 WHEREAS, Equally important in assessing Medicare's success
19 is Medicare's cost-effectiveness; Medicare has consistently
20 contained health care costs better than private health plans;
21 analysis of cumulative spending over a 30-year period further
22 illustrates Medicare's ability to control costs over time;
23 Medicare has been able to accomplish this cost-containment
24 record, in part, by using its resources more efficiently,
25 assessing the clinical effectiveness of services when making

1 coverage decisions and when setting payment rates for certain
2 services; and

3 WHEREAS, Medicare's payment structure supports the United
4 States' health system infrastructure; for example, Medicare
5 supports the nation's teaching hospitals and educational
6 opportunities for health care professionals, through enhanced
7 payments; by supporting graduate education for physicians and
8 other providers, Medicare benefits all Americans, whether or
9 not they are covered by Medicare; Medicare also provides extra
10 support to hospitals that serve a disproportionate number of
11 low-income patients and to rural hospitals, which are often
12 more heavily dependent on Medicare reimbursement than other
13 facilities; Medicare also provides enhanced payments to rural
14 health clinics and Federally Qualified Health Centers in
15 medically underserved areas to ensure that care is available
16 for vulnerable people; and

17 WHEREAS, Medicare is the largest single payer for services
18 provided by the 7,000 home health agencies nationwide;
19 moreover, Medicare is an essential part of the entire U.S.
20 economy as well as a pillar of the health system; and

21 WHEREAS, Medicare is simple, popular and reliable; seniors
22 are very satisfied with the Medicare program; Medicare's
23 success is related to the unparalleled choice and availability

1 of physicians and health care services that it offers people;
2 and

3 WHEREAS, Medicare has served Americans well; it is equally
4 available to all seniors and to people with disabilities,
5 regardless of health or financial status, and realizes the
6 right to health care for many of America's most vulnerable
7 individuals; Medicare continues to symbolize a rational, just
8 and systematic approach to health care access for all
9 Americans; and

10 WHEREAS, The enactment of the Medicare Prescription Drug,
11 Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003 (MMA) has prompted
12 significant changes to the Medicare program; the MMA
13 establishes a new outpatient prescription drug benefit -
14 Medicare Part D - for people with Medicare coverage, and
15 replaces Medicaid drug coverage with the new Part D program for
16 people who receive health coverage from both Medicare and
17 Medicaid; therefore, be it

18 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
19 NINETY-SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we
20 celebrate the past 44 years of Medicare and urge the United
21 States Congress to make sure that the millions of seniors and
22 Americans with disabilities who rely on it will be able to
23 enjoy its dependability and simplicity in the years to come;

1 Medicare's successes to date should guide future changes to the
2 program, so that it can continue to ensure access to care,
3 improve quality of life, support the health care system, and
4 enjoy broad support among the people whom it helps every day;
5 and be it further

6 RESOLVED, That strengthening Medicare and improving the
7 Medicare Part D drug program should be a vital part of any
8 reform of the American health care system; and be it further

9 RESOLVED, That, given the history and successes of the
10 Medicare program, the United States Congress and the President
11 of the United States should immediately reconsider the "Single
12 Payer" option based on the Medicare model for adoption as the
13 primary component of a national health reform plan, so that all
14 of the people in America can have full access to comprehensive,
15 quality health care in the most cost-effective and efficient
16 manner possible; and be it further

17 RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be
18 delivered to President Barack Obama and each member of the
19 Illinois Congressional delegation.