

By: Cook of Colorado

H.C.R. No. 44

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

1 WHEREAS, In 2001, nearly 2.3 million Texans were enrolled in  
2 Medicare, the federal health insurance program for individuals age  
3 65 and older, and that number is expected to reach approximately 2.7  
4 million by the end of this decade; with so many Texans reliant on  
5 Medicare for health insurance coverage, the program accounts for  
6 more than 20 percent of all personal health care spending in the  
7 state; and

8 WHEREAS, Despite its vital importance to so many seniors,  
9 regulations issued by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid  
10 Services (CMS) in December 2002 would further reduce the amount  
11 doctors are paid for treating Medicare patients; this reduction  
12 compounds the effect of a similar reduction in the physician fee  
13 schedule made during the preceding year; and

14 WHEREAS, These cuts have had, and will continue to have,  
15 adverse effects on health care in Texas and nationwide; an American  
16 Medical Association survey conducted in 2002 found that one in four  
17 physicians has either restricted or plans to restrict the number or  
18 type of Medicare patients treated and one in three has stopped or  
19 intends to stop delivering certain services to Medicare  
20 beneficiaries; in fact, industry surveys indicate 21.7 percent of  
21 physicians no longer accept Medicare patients; and

22 WHEREAS, Access to health care is already a problem for  
23 Medicare patients; the Center for Studying Health System Change  
24 indicates that 11 percent of Medicare beneficiaries delayed or did

1 not receive needed care because of problems getting doctor  
2 appointments; and

3 WHEREAS, Recognizing the Medicare crisis, the U.S. House of  
4 Representatives approved a bill last year that would have increased  
5 doctor payments for Medicare treatment by 1.9 percent in 2003, but  
6 the measure did not pass the Senate before the congressional  
7 session ended; instead, after weathering the payment rate cut of  
8 5.4 percent in 2002, which cost Texas doctors a total of \$139.4  
9 million, further reductions are in store; and

10 WHEREAS, Under the new CMS regulations, which are based on a  
11 calculation methodology specified by federal law, additional cuts  
12 scheduled for the next three years will reduce Medicare physician  
13 payments by an additional 12 percent resulting in \$695 million in  
14 losses for Texas doctors, or \$17,841 per physician--the fourth  
15 largest loss in the country; and

16 WHEREAS, Texas physicians, also facing steep increases in  
17 medical liability premiums and low Medicaid reimbursement rates,  
18 are being driven into early retirement or from practicing in  
19 certain communities altogether; the increased loss of access to  
20 medical care is of particular concern to rural communities where  
21 managed care, which represents the primary source for Medicare  
22 treatment, has all but disappeared; and

23 WHEREAS, Legislation currently before Congress would freeze  
24 physician payment rates at their 2002 level for one year; House  
25 Joint Resolution 3, introduced by U.S. Representative Bill Thomas,  
26 would halt implementation of the physician payment regulation and  
27 prevent the cut in Medicare payments to doctors; now, therefore, be

1 it

2           RESOLVED, That the 78th Legislature of the State of Texas  
3 hereby respectfully urge the Congress of the United States to  
4 recognize the impact of proposed Medicare fee reductions by passing  
5 House Joint Resolution 3 and to update the physician Medicare  
6 payment formula to avoid fee reductions currently scheduled through  
7 2005; and, be it further

8           RESOLVED, That the Texas secretary of state forward official  
9 copies of this resolution to the president of the United States, to  
10 the speaker of the house of representatives and the president of the  
11 senate of the United States Congress, and to all the members of the  
12 Texas delegation to the congress with the request that this  
13 resolution be officially entered in the Congressional Record as a  
14 memorial to the Congress of the United States of America.