



AMERICAN COUNSELING ASSOCIATION

Late Saturday, November 7th, the House of Representatives passed an historic health insurance reform bill—H.R. 3962, the “Affordable Health Care for America Act”—including language establishing Medicare coverage of licensed professional counselors for the provision of medically-necessary outpatient mental health services. The Medicare coverage provision, which also applies to marriage and family therapists, is included in Section 1308 of the bill. According to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO), H.R. 3962 would reduce the federal deficit by \$109 billion over the next ten years, and would expand coverage to 96% of Americans. The legislation was passed by a vote of 220-215.

ACA applauds the House of Representatives for passing this legislation. ACA has long sought to establish Medicare coverage of counselors’ services, and has consistently supported expanding health insurance coverage. Counselors can identify their Representative at the House of Representatives website at <http://www.house.gov>. A listing of how members voted is available [here](#).

The Senate is working toward a vote on health insurance legislation. Unfortunately, the legislation approved by the Senate Finance Committee does not include Medicare coverage of counselors.

Counselors are encouraged to contact their Senators to remind them that the Senate approved Medicare coverage of counselors in both 2003 and 2005, and ask them to work to include the counselor coverage language as part of health care legislation this year. Medicare beneficiaries need better access to outpatient mental health services, and deserve the same choice of provider currently enjoyed by those with private health insurance. Constituent contacts are likely to make the difference between success and failure on this issue!

For more information or for questions, contact:

Scott Barstow

Director of Public Policy and Legislation

American Counseling Association

5999 Stevenson Avenue

Alexandria, VA 22304

703.823.9800 x234

703.405.9711 (cell)

703.823.0252 (fax)

800.347.6647 x234

703.823.6828 TDD

sbarstow@counseling.org

www.counseling.org