



## **Long-Term Care House Members to Introduce Bill Opposing Potential Nursing Home Pay Cuts**

Representatives from the Congressional Long Term Care Caucus Nov. 1 announced they will introduce a bill Nov. 6 opposing potential reductions to the Medicare Part A nursing home benefit.

Reps. Thomas H. Allen (D-Maine) and Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.) joined with members of the Coalition to Protect Senior Care (CPSC) to express their concern about the potential for \$2.7 billion in Medicare cuts to nursing home care. That level of reductions was contained in a bill, the Children's Health and Medicare Protection (CHAMP) Act of 2007 (H.R. 3162), that cleared the House earlier in the year but did not move in the Senate. The coalition works to improve access and affordability of long-term care.

"We need to make a statement," Capito told BNA Nov. 1, explaining why the representatives are moving forward with an independent piece of legislation addressing the issue, as opposed to folding it into a larger Medicare package.

The House long-term care bill that will be introduced, the Long-Term Care Quality and Modernization Act, aims to modernize payment policies, address staffing issues, and invest in the infrastructure of nursing homes, according to the office of Rep. Earl Pomeroy (D-N.D.). Pomeroy, co-chairman of the Long Term Care Caucus with Capito, is a co-sponsor of the bill.

### **Medicare Cuts Feared**

Although the CHAMP Act has not gained traction in the Senate, CPSC is concerned about the potential for the \$2.7 billion payment reduction or a similar cut to appear in a Medicare legislative package before the end of the year, according to a spokeswoman for the coalition.

"There is a linkage between payment stability and quality improvement," Charlotte Eliopoulos, executive director for the American Association of Long Term Care Nursing, a member group of CPSC, said at the press briefing Nov. 1. CPSC is composed of caregiver and clinical groups, including the American Health Care Association and the American Health Quality Association.

The potential payment reduction also has been met with opposition in the Senate. Sen. Tim Johnson (D-S.D.) sent a letter Oct. 23 to Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) and Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) urging them to oppose any reductions in Medicare funding for skilled nursing facility care "in any future legislation that addresses Medicare policy changes."

*Sen. Johnson's letter is available at*

[http://www.ahcancal.org/advocacy/Letters/Johnson\\_ltr\\_CHAMP\\_23Oct2007.pdf](http://www.ahcancal.org/advocacy/Letters/Johnson_ltr_CHAMP_23Oct2007.pdf)