

Is Medicare Healthy?



Your Social Security

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News and Information for SSDI and SSI Recipients

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Is Medicare Healthy? Congress Puts a Band-Aid on Medicare.

But Can't Agree on a Permanent Fix.

Earlier this month, Congress passed what has been referred to as the "doc fix." With just hours to spare, the government temporarily delayed cuts of 24 percent for doctor reimbursements under Medicare. This action patches up the system for a year, but does not address the long-term problem of how doctors get paid. Medicare advocates are concerned that if the cuts are allowed

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to take effect then large numbers of doctors will refuse to treat Medicare patients.

This broken payment formula was created by a 17 year-old law. As reported in the Washington Post, "In 1997, Congress created the Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR), a system that pegged the amount of money budgeted for Medicare payments to projected growth of the economy. However, within a few years, health-care costs far outpaced economic growth—creating a multibillion-dollar shortfall in funding for Medicare payments." The April vote marks the 17th time since 2003 Congress has passed a stopgap measure to avoid drastic cuts in Medicare reimbursements to doctors.

This latest Band-Aid was slapped on Medicare even though there was an effort by Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) to hammer out a bipartisan agreement to get rid of the SGR system entirely and put a better system in its place. "We'll punt, patch it up and let that SGR



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limp along just as it has year after year," Wyden conceded during a floor speech prior to the vote. "Every senator that I talked to says that just defies common sense."

While there seems to be bipartisan agreement that the doctors' payment formula needs to be reworked and there should be incentives for doctors to provide less costly care options, there's no agreement on how to pay the approximately \$140 billion cost of replacing the old system. So, in a rerun of almost every important issue in Washington these days, our elected political leaders just "kicked the can

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down the road."

"We just don't have the votes right now to fix this problem for good," Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) told Fox News. Reid, who negotiated the measure with House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio), put a rosy spin on the vote saying, "For the millions of elderly Americans and their doctors this fix is good news. It means the promise of accessible, quality health care to our nation's seniors is being honored for another year."

However, conservative Senator Tom Coburn (R-Okla.) blasted what he called legislative gimmicks in passing the "doc fix." Fox News said Coburn believes the just passed measure delays a long-sought overhaul of Medicare's fee-for-service system, which pays doctors according to the number of tests and treatments they perform. "We are going to put off until tomorrow what we should be doing today," Coburn said. "It's a sham. ... It's nothing but gimmicks." All of which is to say, look for the "doc fix" problem to pop up again a year from

now and once again put Medicare in jeopardy.



"5 Deadly Mistakes That Can Destroy Your Social Security Disability Case" is the #1 guide to improving the odds of winning a disability case.

For a FREE copy for you or someone you care about call Cuddigan Law at 402.933.5400 or email us at lawteam@cuddiganlaw.com



Comfort Food

From the kitchen of Janet Cuddigan

Some of the best foods combine the flavors of two dishes to create a new and distinct taste. This month's recipe combines two of my favorites.

Taco Pizza

1 pound ground beef, browned and drained
16 ounces tomato sauce
1 packet taco seasoning mix
1 package refrigerated crescent rolls
16 ounces shredded Mexican cheese
Optional: sour cream, salsa, tomatoes, and black olives

Press crescent rolls flat into 9 x 13 inch pan. Bake at 375 until golden brown. Brown ground beef and drain. Mix with tomato sauce and seasoning. Simmer until warm. Pour over crescent roll crust. Sprinkle cheese on top. Put back in oven until cheese melts. Remove from oven. Add toppings as desired.

For Your Information

Cuddigan Law maintains an extensive free library of articles, videos and blogs about Social Security disability.

Visit our web site at cuddiganlaw.com.



Here are some current items you may find informative and useful:

This is Not a Test But the Social Security Blue Book May be Important:
<http://www.cuddiganlaw.com/blog/this-is-not-a-test-but-the-social-security-blue-book-may-be-important.cfm>

Learn what to expect at your Social Security Disability Hearing:
<http://www.cuddiganlaw.com/video/learn-what-to-expect-at-your-social-security-disability-hearing.cfm>

You May Qualify for Disability Benefits for Chronic Migraines:
<http://www.cuddiganlaw.com/library/factors-the-ssa-considers-for-chronic-migraines-and-disability.cfm>

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Meet Philip Martin

A spotlight on the professional team members who work for you at Cuddigan Law.

Philip S. Martin has exclusively practiced Social Security disability law since he joined Cuddigan Law in July 2012. In 2012, Phil received his Juris Doctorate degree with a concentration in litigation from Creighton University. He was admitted to the bar in that same year and is currently licensed to practice law in Nebraska and Utah.



While attending Creighton University, Phil clerked with Legal Aid of Nebraska for a year-and-a-half where he practiced bankruptcy, family law, and social security disability. Phil is a sustaining member of the National Organization of Social Security Claimant's Representatives.

"The reason I enjoy practicing social security disability law is because it has a human element that you don't often see in other areas of law. When practicing social security disability law you get to meet with a client on several occasions and come to understand the difficult situation they are going through. At that point, it is not just about representing a client or making a good legal argument. It is about advocating for somebody that you care about and fighting for a cause that is worth fighting for."

Phil currently lives in La Vista, Nebraska with his wife, Arbree, and two-year-old daughter, McKayla. He enjoys traveling, attending sporting events, and spending time outdoors.



Tim & Sean Cuddigan

Did You Know?

This year one in six Nebraska residents will receive Social Security benefits—that's 317,489 Nebraskans

600,699 Iowans are Social Security beneficiaries—that's one out of every five Iowa residents.

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