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**MAG BACKING EFFORT TO COLLECT ONE MILLION SIGNATURES TO PROMOTE
“RATIONAL” MEDICARE SYSTEM TO ENSURE PATIENTS’ ACCESS TO CARE**

ATLANTA – The Medical Association of Georgia (MAG) is promoting a nationwide effort to collect one million signatures from physicians and patients calling for a “rational” Medicare physician payment system to ensure that seniors and TRICARE program beneficiaries continue to have access to care in their hour of need, according to MAG President Gary C. Richter, M.D.

“Congress just passed the largest piece of health reform legislation in decades,” says Dr. Richter. “But they failed to address the Medicare funding mechanism for physicians – one of the single most important factors that dictate whether patients have access to the medical care they need in this country.”

What’s more, Dr. Richter explains that Congressional leaders failed to take the action that was needed to avert a 21 percent cut in Medicare pay for physicians that went into effect on April 1. He sums that, “It has become nearly impossible for physicians to see Medicare patients as a practical economic matter with the current formula, so we can expect to see more and more doctors opt-out of the program. Both patients and physicians lose in the end.”

Once the signatures are collected, Dr. Richter says the “Medicare Meltdown” petition – which is being supported by all 50 state medical societies and 12 specialty societies – will be delivered to Congressional leaders at a public event in June in Washington, D.C.

MAG is encouraging patients and physicians in Georgia to sign the petition at www.ipetitions.com/petition/meltdown.

Dr. Richter believes that patients and doctors should ultimately determine the value of medical services – not the government or other third parties – while also stressing that, “We can’t truly restore our health care system until patients and physicians have the right to privately contract.”

He concludes, “Adequately funding Medicare comes down to the government fulfilling the promise it made to American seniors when it instituted the program in 1964.”

With more than 6,000 members, MAG is the leading voice for physicians in Georgia. Go to www.mag.org for additional information.

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