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ACLA APPLAUDS SENATORS SALAZAR, ROBERTS, AND CANTWELL FOR INTRODUCING BIPARTISAN LEGISLATION TO REPEAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING DEMONSTRATION

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The American Clinical Laboratory Association (ACLA) applauds the leadership of Senators Ken Salazar (D-CO), Pat Roberts (R-KS), and Maria Cantwell (D-WA) for introducing the Preserving Access to Laboratory Services Act of 2007 which would repeal the Medicare competitive bidding demonstration project for clinical laboratory services.

The legislation – S. 2099 – was introduced on September 26, 2007. All three Senators serve on the Senate Finance Committee, the committee with jurisdiction over Medicare and the laboratory competitive bidding demonstration project. Similar legislation, HR 3453, was introduced by Small Business Committee Chairwoman Nydia Velazquez (D-NY) on August 4, 2007.

Alan Mertz, President of ACLA, said “ACLA commends Senators Salazar and Roberts for introducing this important legislation because it’s time that Congress pull the plug on this unworkable and unfixable project. The legislation is aptly named because the demonstration will disrupt beneficiaries’ access to critically important laboratory services. ACLA urges Congress to adopt repeal legislation before the demonstration progresses any further.”

In related news, the House bill to repeal the demo, HR 3453, is gaining momentum with the addition of three House Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee members joining as co-sponsors: Reps. Diana DeGette (D-CO), Bart Gordon (D-TN) and Jim Matheson (D-UT).

Mertz lauded movement in Congress to repeal competitive bidding saying, “The clinical laboratory fee schedule is the wrong place to be looking for cost savings given that laboratory services under Medicare have already been reduced 40% in real terms since 1984. Moreover, laboratory services represent only 1.7% of Medicare spending, yet impact 70 - 80% of all medical decisions. Laboratory services are just what the name implies – services, not commodities. Ironically, the misnamed Medicare competitive bidding demo will mean *less* competition, not more.”

ACLA represents local, regional and national clinical laboratories throughout the United States and has been a leader in the campaign to repeal the Medicare competitive bidding demonstration project.

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