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## **APA Encourages Passage of House Healthcare Reform Proposals**

**ARLINGTON, Va. (Nov. 6, 2009)** – The American Psychiatric Association is calling for concurrent passage of H.R. 3962 (the Affordable Health Care for America Act) and H.R. 3961 (the Medicare Physician Payment Reform Act of 2009), which together provide the best opportunity for comprehensive healthcare reform.

“Taken together, H.R. 3961 and H.R. 3962 represent the fundamental reform of our health insurance and health care systems that is needed in order to protect and expand patient access to care and continued choice of physicians. Passage of both bills is essential,” said APA president Alan F. Schatzberg, M.D., in a letter to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi supporting passage of the legislation.

While H.R. 3962 is – like any legislation – not perfect, Schatzberg notes in the letter to the Speaker, the APA clearly recognizes that it offers many benefits for psychiatrists and other physicians and, most importantly, for patients and their families. These include:

- Expanding health insurance coverage to millions of Americans who now lack it.
- Ending pre-existing condition exclusions. This alone will be of direct benefit to our patients, even more so when coupled with the elimination of lifetime limits, barring insurers from varying premiums due to health status, and adding coverage of young adults up to age 27 on their parents’ insurance.
- Establishing a public insurance option within the Health Insurance Exchange while preserving voluntary physician participation in public plans.
- Ensuring that coverage of treatment for mental illness, including substance use disorders, is required as part of the required basic benefits package for all insurance marketed within the Exchange, while avoiding loopholes that might inadvertently have undermined mental health “parity” coverage.
- Extending until 2011 the current mental health add-on as enacted in the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008.
- In conjunction with H.R. 3961, eliminating the pending 21% reduction in the Medicare payment update for physicians, while permanently reforming the flawed Sustainable Growth Rate formula that is the source of these draconian annual cuts.

“The American Psychiatric Association is pleased to support concurrent passage of H.R. 3961 and H.R. 3962. Taken together, these bills embody long-awaited reform of our health care system,” Schatzberg said in the letter.

The American Psychiatric Association is a national medical specialty society whose more than 38,000 physician members specialize in the diagnosis, treatment, prevention and research of mental illnesses including substance use disorders. Visit the APA at [www.psych.org](http://www.psych.org) and [www.HealthyMinds.org](http://www.HealthyMinds.org).