



North Carolina Chapter of the American College of Cardiology

"All endeavor calls for the ability to tramp the last mile, shape the last plan, endure the last hours toil. The fight to the finish spirit is the one... characteristic we must possess if we are to face the future as finishers."

-Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862)

The Final Stretch...

Of our 37,000+ membership in the ACC, less than 2% have responded to our "Take Action for Access Week" call to action to contact their representatives: <http://capwiz.com/acc/issues/alert/?alertid=14441501&PROCESS=Take+Action> about stopping the proposed CMS fee cuts via legislation.

The College has made it as easy as possible to take action. The toll-free grassroots hotline (800-210-7193) will connect members directly with their members in Congress. The [Campaign for Patient Access](#) website also provides easy access to lawmakers via email. Sample letters and talking points, as well as materials for you and your patients, are readily available.

We need a groundswell of members and patients to use their contacts via email or phone to get calls to Washington, DC.

The Final Physician Fee Schedule will devastate cardiology practices in its current form. Although there is a phase-in for certain cuts over four years, the 2010 cuts alone will force many practices to lay off staff, close outlying services and otherwise reduce services. The resulting access issues will force cardiac patients to the hospital setting for diagnostic tests, increasing both patients' out-of-pocket costs and Medicare's overall costs since the hospital setting is more expensive than the physician office setting. The ACC is asking all grass root members to contact their congressional delegation to ask them to support our cardiac patients.

What we need now are personal calls from cardiologists and emails to the Hill. We need as many patient letters as we can muster sent to Congress, using

information on the ACC.org/can website or the [Guiding Hearts Alliance](#) website:

The grassroots are going to make or break this one. ACC Advocacy staff are going to offices and contacting legislative staff but we need a real push from the membership to reach the finish line. We need to raise this to the level that all Members of Congress feel comfortable with a fix being attached to a bill or added in conference.

Unfortunately, Molly Nichelson in Advocacy reports that the calls and emails are not really happening to the level we expected despite calling for activity in every way possible. I know the members are tired, or maybe even they think that the Final Rule, like the SGR, will be fixed at the end of the year. However you must know that we have numerous other specialties campaigning against us:

- American Academy of Dermatology Association
- American Academy of Family Physicians
- American Academy of Neurology Professional Association
- American Academy of Ophthalmology
- American Academy of Otolaryngology - Head and Neck Surgery
- American Association of Neurological Surgeons
- American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons
- American College of Emergency Physicians
- American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
- American College of Surgeons
- American Occupational Therapy Association
- American Optometric Association
- American Physical Therapy Association
- American Psychiatric Association
- American Society of Anesthesiologists
- American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery
- American Society of Plastic Surgeons
- Congress of Neurological Surgeons
- Infectious Diseases Society of America

It is clear that their message is reaching Capitol Hill in numbers that exceed our membership response. We cannot say with any confidence that victory is near. Congressional staffers are tired of healthcare issues in general due to Healthcare Reform, plus the clock is ticking down before Congress leaves for their winter break. We really need the help of all cardiovascular specialists and their patients now in this final effort.

We have all the tools to keep the members engaged -- our 800 number (800-210-7193), our [ACC CardioAdvocacy Network \(ACC | CAN\) website](#) to send emails, faxes and letters to members of Congress, our [Campaign for Patient Access website](#), the [Guarding Hearts Alliance website](#), [patient materials](#) on the Campaign for Patient Access website, the [practice survival tools](#), and Op-Eds in newspapers across the country.

[Take Action Now! Write your Members of Congress.](#)

Thank you all again for your efforts,

*Oscar R. Jenkins Jr, MD, FACC
Governor, North Carolina Chapter of the ACC*

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*Our Mission:
To support North Carolina cardiovascular specialists as they
serve their patients.*