

Washington, D.C. - Rep. Peter Welch (VT-AL) joined the U.S. House today in overriding President Bush's veto of H.R. 6331, the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act, 383 to 41.

The legislation ensures Vermont seniors have access to doctors they know and trust by preventing a devastating 12.3 cut Medicare reimbursements for Vermont physicians.

President Bush vetoed the bipartisan legislation earlier today. The Senate is expected to take up the veto override early this evening.

"With this veto, the President has once again demonstrated just how out of touch he is. He chose insurance companies over seniors and family doctors, undermining the ability of Vermont seniors to access the doctor they trust," said Welch. "Congress has stood up to the President and to the insurance companies, preventing cuts that would have devastated health care access in rural states like Vermont."

The bill eliminates the pending 10 percent nationwide average cut in Medicare payments to physicians for the remainder of 2008 and provides a 1.1 percent increase in Medicare physician payments for 2009. The bill also provides a 2 percent increase for doctors who report on quality measures through 2010 and provides financial incentives to providers to encourage the use of electronic prescribing technology.

The bill improves access to health care in rural states like Vermont by increasing payments for sole community hospitals, critical access hospitals, and ambulances; extending expiring provisions that preserve payment equity for rural physicians and hospitals that run clinical laboratories; and increasing access to tele-health and other critical services.

On June 24, the House passed the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act by a veto-proof margin of 355 to 59. On July 9, the Senate passed the bill and sent it to the President after invoking cloture to proceed to the bill by a veto-proof margin of 69 to 30.