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## **ASTRO applauds today's Congressional proposal to repeal and replace the SGR**

Fairfax, Va., February 6, 2014 — The American Society for Radiation Oncology (ASTRO) supports today's bipartisan proposal to repeal and replace the Medicare physician payment formula. The [proposal](#), announced by the leaders of the Senate Finance and House Ways & Means and Energy & Commerce Committees, repeals the Medicare sustainable growth rate (SGR) formula; provides a 0.5 percent increase each year for five years; consolidates three existing quality programs into one quality incentive program; and transitions reimbursement away from the existing fee-for-service to a value-based model. Congress has until March 31, 2014 to finalize the payment package for the legislation, which is estimated at nearly \$150 billion. As Congress looks for ways to off-set the cost of this legislation, ASTRO urges closure of the physician self-referral loophole.

The "Promoting Integrity in Medicare Act of 2013" (PIMA), introduced last August by Rep. Jackie Speier (D-Calif.), would provide billions of dollars in savings by closing the in-office ancillary services (IOAS) exception to the physician self-referral law. Numerous bipartisan groups and President Obama have endorsed closing the self-referral loophole. ASTRO recommends inclusion of PIMA in the payment package because it represents sound policy that protects patients and saves money that would help off-set the costs of repealing the SGR.

"We commend the extraordinary efforts of the Senate and House for this bipartisan legislation that will stabilize and strengthen the nation's Medicare program," said ASTRO Chair Colleen A.F. Lawton, MD, FASTRO. "The agreement provides a positive path for us to meet the nation's growing

health care needs and rewards the value and quality of care that we provide to more than one million cancer patients each year.

"We urge Congress to close the self-referral loophole in its final Medicare package to off-set the costs of this landmark legislation," concluded Lawton.

ASTRO is a partner in the [Alliance for Integrity in Medicare \(AIM\)](#), a broad coalition of medical societies committed to ending the practice of inappropriate physician self-referral and focused on improving patient care and preserving valuable Medicare resources. In addition to ASTRO, AIM partners include the American Clinical Laboratory Association, the American College of Radiology, the American Physical Therapy Association, the American Society for Clinical Pathology, the Association for Quality Imaging, the College of American Pathologists and the Radiology Business Management Association.

## ABOUT ASTRO

*ASTRO is the premier radiation oncology society in the world, with more than 10,000 members who are physicians, nurses, biologists, physicists, radiation therapists, dosimetrists and other health care professionals that specialize in treating patients with radiation therapies. As the leading organization in radiation oncology, the Society is dedicated to improving patient care through professional education and training, support for clinical practice and health policy standards, advancement of science and research, and advocacy. ASTRO publishes two medical journals, International Journal of Radiation Oncology • Biology • Physics ([www.redjournal.org](http://www.redjournal.org)) and Practical Radiation Oncology ([www.practicalradonc.org](http://www.practicalradonc.org)); developed and maintains an extensive patient website, [www.rtanswers.org](http://www.rtanswers.org); and created the Radiation Oncology Institute ([www.roinstitute.org](http://www.roinstitute.org)), a non-profit foundation to support research and education efforts around the world that enhance and confirm the critical role of radiation therapy in improving cancer treatment. To learn more about ASTRO, visit [www.astro.org](http://www.astro.org).*

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