

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20515
January 20, 1984

Dr. Hector Garcia
1315 Bright Street
Corpus Christi, Texas 78405

Dear Dr. Garcia:

Knowing of your interest in health issues, I thought you would like an update on several bills that were passed during the first session of Congress.

A prospective payment bill, Public Law 98-21, revises procedures for Medicare reimbursements for hospital care by requiring that hospitals be paid for treating Medicare patients at predetermined rates rather than reimbursed for actual costs incurred.

The House has passed H.R. 2350, which would establish a National Institute of Nursing and would create a separate National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Diseases. It authorized funding through Fiscal year 1986 for the National Cancer Institute, the Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, and the Medical Library Assistance Program, as well as for arthritis, diabetes, and digestive diseases advisory boards and arthritis and diabetes centers. Funding levels were increased approximately 15 percent over the previous year. The Senate has not yet acted on the bill.

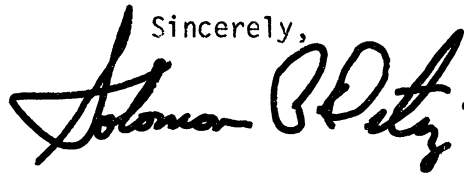
After Congress reconvenes on January 23rd, the House Ways and Means Committee will offer an amendment to the tax bill, H.R. 4170, to limit physicians' fees for inpatient Medicare patients and to bar physicians from billing Medicare patients except for deductible and coinsurance. All physicians at participating hospitals would have to sign a formal agreement accepting Medicare assignment. After discussing this with various physicians and government officials, I have decided to oppose this amendment.

Another pending bill, the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, H.R. 1904, contains provisions for treating infants at risk with life-threatening conditions, also known as the Baby Doe provision. It would require that, within one year after enactment, states have in place procedures to ensure that nutrition and medically-indicated treatment are provided to infants at risk with life-threatening congenital

impairments. It would establish procedures for any interested person to report any known or suspected instance of denial of medically-indicated treatment.

I believe this bill raises serious questions about the role of the federal government in the hospital nursery. I have spoken with physicians and HHS officials about the intent and consequences of such a proposal. I will review this legislation fully and will follow the debate very carefully.

I hope this legislative update has been helpful. I hope you will keep me informed of your views on issues of interest to you.

Sincerely,


Solomon P. Ortiz
Member of Congress