



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Observation Stay Legislation Supports AMDA Policy**

*Columbia, Md.* – The *Improving Access to Medicare Coverage Act of 2011 (S.818 & H.R. 1543)*, introduced in the House of Representatives on Thursday, April 14 by Reps. Joe Courtney (D-CT) and Tom Latham (R-IA) and in the Senate by Senators John Kerry (D-MA) and Olympia Snowe (R-ME), includes provisions supported by AMDA – Dedicated to Long Term Medicine. In essence, this bipartisan bill would allow observation stay time in a hospital to count toward satisfying the three-day inpatient hospital eligibility requirement for coverage of skilled nursing facility services under Medicare.

“This common sense change will ensure that seniors no longer face thousands of dollars in bills for skilled care because of an arbitrary federal policy,” said Rep. Courtney. He added, “There are no two ways about it: three days in the hospital are three days in the hospital. Anyone who meets that threshold should receive the same benefit from Medicare.”

AMDA has long supported counting emergency room and observation time toward the three-day inpatient qualifying stay requirement for skilled nursing facility care. In addition to AMDA, the Center for Medicare Advocacy, AARP, Leading Age (formerly, the American Association of Homes and Services to the Aging), American Health Care Association, American Medical Association (AMA), and the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare are also strong supporters of the bill.

AMDA believes this legislative fix is a necessary step in the right direction to addressing the issue. Eric Tangalos, MD, CMD, AMDA’s delegate to the AMA House of Delegates recently recalled that as far back as 1991, AMDA was raising – within the framework of the AMA – the problem of the requirement for a three-day inpatient hospital stay for skilled nursing care. “Twenty years later, we are still having the same problem,” said Dr. Tangalos during a policy address at Long Term Care Medicine – 2011, AMDA’s annual symposium held in Tampa, Fla., last month. This was one of AMDA’s top policy issues addressed by Dr. Tangalos at the meeting.

“When patients should be focusing on their recovery, far too many are caught off-guard by this ambiguous policy,” said Sen. Snowe, adding, “This bipartisan legislation provides much needed clarity and will ensure that patients receive the full coverage they deserve.”

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*AMDA – Dedicated to Long Term Care (formerly the American Medical Directors Association) is the national professional association of medical directors, attending physicians, and other professionals practicing long term care medicine committed to the continuous improvement of*

*patient care. AMDA provides education, advocacy, information, and professional development enable its members to deliver quality long term care.*