

# House joins senate to avert Medicare cuts

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(HealthDay)—The House of Representatives settled on an 11th-hour agreement late Tuesday night that has averted the widespread tax increases and spending cuts that would have gone into effect January 1. This agreement occurred 21 hours after the U.S. Senate did its part to steer the country clear of the "fiscal cliff."

Vice President Joseph Biden worked with Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky to secure the Senate's 89-8 vote. McConnell recommended that the entire Congress act quickly to pass the measure and continue working on finding effective ways to cut spending in the coming months.

The House vote was more fractured, with Democrats voting for the bill

by an overwhelming 172-16 margin and Republicans opposing the bill 151-85. The bill prevents a 27 percent cut in fees paid to doctors who treat [Medicare](#) patients. In addition, the bill blocks middle-class taxes from rising, raises taxes on wealthier Americans, and delays legislatively mandated spending cuts for two months.

"To some extent, talk of a 'fiscal cliff' and its implications can seem remote. But there is a very personal element to all of this. If [Medicare reimbursement](#) is slashed, the federal government will, in essence, be cutting the income—along with raising the taxes—of physicians who don't work for the federal government," David Katz, M.D., director of the Yale University School of Medicine's Prevention Research Center told HealthDay. "This certainly makes Washington gridlock personal for all of my fee-for-service colleagues. If they, in turn, translate resentment of this heavy-handed imposition into practice, this may get personal for [Medicare patients](#) who have a harder time accessing care."

**More information:** [More Information](#)

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