

Congress passes bill to stop cut to Medicare docs

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This Oct. 14, 2009 file photo shows Senate Finance Committee Chairman Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore. speaking on Capitol Hill in Washington. Congress is poised to give doctors who treat Medicare patients an 11th hour reprieve from a cut in their government fees. Monday's Senate vote would send legislation to repair Medicare's flawed payment formula for a year to President Barack Obama for his signature. It comes just hours before a midnight deadline Wyden promises to keep pressing ahead with a long-term solution, proposing to use savings from the troop drawdown in Afghanistan to pay the cost. Republicans and most budget experts say such savings are phony and are demanding at least some of the money to come from cuts to Obama's Affordable Care Act. (AP Photo/Charles Dharapak, File)

With just hours to spare, Congress has stepped in to prevent doctors who treat Medicare patients from being hit with a 24 percent cut in their payments from the government.

The Senate's 64-35 vote sends a measure to delay the cuts for a year to President Barack Obama, who's expected to quickly sign it.

The \$21 billion measure would stave off a 24 percent cut in Medicare reimbursements to doctors for a year and extend dozens of other expiring health care provisions such as higher payment rates for rural hospitals. The legislation is paid for by cuts to [health care](#) providers, but fully half of the cuts won't kick in for 10 years.

It's the seventeenth temporary "patch" to a broken payment formula that dates to 1997.

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