

**October 23, 2009**

Washington, D.C.— U.S. Representatives Jason Altmire, PA-04, Glenn `GT' Thompson, PA-05, and John Murtha, PA-12, have cosponsored a bipartisan measure, H.R. 3790, which would eliminate the Medicare competitive bidding program for durable medical equipment, prosthetics, orthotics, and supplies (DMEPOS).

The bill, introduced by Rep. Kendrick Meek, D-FL, on October 13th, has strong bipartisan support from 30 Members of Congress.

Durable medical equipment includes such things as oxygen tanks and machines, wheelchairs, hospital beds and diabetic supplies. The Medicare Modernization Act of 2003 mandated that Medicare begin implementation of an equipment competitive bidding program. This program was delayed by Congress on July 15, 2008, 15 days after it started, due to the serious fundamental, procedural and operational flaws.

In 2008, Medicare data shows that there were 9,198 durable medical equipment providers that specialized in the products included in the program. When the winning bids were announced, that number decreased to 376 – a reduction of more than 95% of potential providers. This promised a negative effect on those who receive the products and services. Fewer providers at far distances from the clients could mean that a problem with a piece of equipment could not be addressed quickly.

**“CMS’ competitive bidding program is a fundamentally flawed proposal that could make it harder for western Pennsylvania seniors to purchase the highly specialized medical equipment that they need,” Congressman Jason Altmire (PA-04) said. “The common sense legislation we are proposing will eliminate this flawed program and protect seniors and small businesses without adding one penny to the federal deficit.”**

**“In this time of economic uncertainty, the last thing government should be doing is creating regulations that will adversely affect small businesses and remove real competition from the marketplace. If the number of smaller home providers of durable medical equipment declines as a result of so called “competitive” bidding, I am concerned that more homecare patients will need to be hospitalized – that drives up cost in the long run,” said Thompson.**

**“Our seniors have always been able to rely on local suppliers to provide them with their medical equipment needs,” said Congressman John P. Murtha (PA-12). “The Medicare competitive bidding program would be detrimental to our rural areas because it would force our seniors to travel long distances to receive the medical equipment they need.”**

While H.R. 3790 reduces Medicare reimbursements to home medical equipment providers over the next five years, it allows home medical providers to stay in business and continue to serve the millions of Americans who require home-based care.

On October 21, the current bid program for medical equipment was opened in nine metropolitan statistical areas across the U.S. including Pittsburgh. The winners would be selected in 2010

and the new prices would become effective January 1, 2011. If H.R. 3790 is successful, that process will be stopped.