

## **W&M Rejects Move To Tie Doc Pay TO MEI, Murphy Wants To Tweak E&C Policy**

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(Inside Health Policy)

Ways & Means Committee Republicans rejected an early morning bid from Rep. Jimmy Panetta (D-CA) to link Medicare physician payment to the Medical Economic Index in the reconciliation language it passed along party lines Wednesday morning. Rep. Greg Murphy, who co-chairs the Doctors Caucus, said that while he backs linking doc pay to MEI, Panetta's amendment carries an unworkable \$200 billion pricetag. The North Carolina Republican revealed he's pushing to boost the \$8.9 billion pay fix included in the Energy & Commerce Committee's reconciliation bill by about \$4 billion -- and that he would refuse to vote for the final House reconciliation bill without the change.

The Energy & Commerce bill doesn't fix the 2.83% cut to Medicare pay in 2025 but would tie pay to 75% of the MEI in 2026 -- and then to 10% of the MEI in later years. But Panetta argues the policy could leave some doctors with less pay than they'd get under current law. Panetta's amendment mirrors the bipartisan Strengthen Medicare for Patients and Providers Act which is backed by numerous physicians' groups and got 172 co-sponsors last session.

Murphy was not among the co-sponsors, saying during the markup that he considered \$200 billion to be cost prohibitive.

**He also said that while the \$8.9 billion physician pay increase in the Energy & Commerce bill is a "good start," it's not enough.**

"I think we can squeeze another \$4 billion out to let them make our physicians and all the other people who do benefit from Medicare payments enough," he said. "In fact . . . unless they do that, I'm not voting for the final bill."

"I want us to be fiscally responsible, but I also want our doctors to actually be able to survive in private practice," he said.

Numerous Democratic efforts to make the enhanced Affordable Care Act premium tax credits permanent - which Republicans omitted from the mark -- and to close the Medicaid gap also failed on party lines. -- Amy Lotven ([alotven@iwpnews.com](mailto:alotven@iwpnews.com))