



*Caring that Feels Right at Home*  
**Press Release**

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**American Association for Homecare Thanks Congressmen Price and Shuler  
for Introducing the Home Oxygen Patient Protection Act**

*Legislation is Step Toward Fundamental Reform of Medicare Oxygen Policy.*

ARLINGTON, VA, May 13, 2009—Last night Congressmen Tom Price, M.D. (R-Ga.) and Heath Shuler (D-N.C.) introduced the Home Oxygen Patient Protection (HOPP) Act, H.R. 2373, in the House of Representatives. The HOPP Act restores payments for home oxygen therapy through the beneficiary's period of medical need.

“The American Association for Homecare thanks Congressmen Price and Shuler for their continued leadership in supporting patient-centered policy for home oxygen therapy in Medicare,” said Tyler J. Wilson, president of the Association. “The Home Oxygen Patient Protection Act would help ensure appropriate oxygen therapy payments for the period of medical need. The HOPP Act is an important step toward fundamental reform of Medicare oxygen policy, which should have a greater focus on patient need and on the essential services required in providing quality oxygen therapy to seniors in their homes. This issue is significant for both Democrats and Republicans and we expect strong support from both parties.”

In 2006, Congress dramatically changed policy for oxygen therapy by capping monthly reimbursements to providers after 36 months of use. Before that policy took effect, the home oxygen provider was reimbursed as long as the oxygen was medically necessary, and the oxygen provider took responsibility for maintenance, a back-up system, 24-hour emergency service, and other services required for proper use and patient safety. Medical oxygen is a highly regulated prescription drug.

The typical Medicare home oxygen beneficiary is a senior who is suffering from late-stage COPD with associated severe low levels of oxygen in the blood (hypoxemia). COPD is the leading cause of morbidity and mortality worldwide and is the only leading cause of death for which both prevalence and mortality are rising. COPD is a chronic, debilitating disease characterized by severe airflow limitation resulting from chronic inflammation of the airways, decrease in functional lung tissue, and the dysfunction of pulmonary blood vessels. Approximately 15 million Americans have been diagnosed with COPD, and an estimated 12 to 15 million more remain undiagnosed.

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*The American Association for Homecare represents durable medical equipment providers, manufacturers, and other organizations in the homecare community. Members serve the medical needs of millions of Americans who require oxygen equipment and therapy, mobility assistive technologies, medical supplies, inhalation drug therapy, home infusion, and other medical equipment and services in their homes. The Association's members operate more than 3,000 homecare locations in all 50 states. Visit [www.aahomecare.org](http://www.aahomecare.org).*

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