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Dear Senator:

On behalf of the American Hospital Association (AHA) and our nearly 5,000 member hospitals, health systems and other health care organizations, and our 37,000 individual members, I am writing to express our opposition to an amendment to establish “fast track” consideration for rescissions.

The proposal gives the President authority to suggest line-item rescissions for both discretionary and mandatory funding items, including Medicare and Medicaid. In our view, this is an inappropriate expansion of Executive powers that will impede Congress’ ability to address health care policy. In their wisdom, our founding fathers enunciated in the Constitution a carefully crafted balance of power between the branches of government. The line-item rescission upsets the balance of power between the legislative and executive branches allowing the President to undercut the will of Congress.

In addition, the line-item rescission proposal could result in the curtailment or elimination of health care services on which our patients depend. More than 80 million Americans depend on their local hospitals for Medicare and Medicaid services. Hospitals care for everyone who comes through their doors 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year and at the same time must stand ready to respond to natural disasters, pandemic diseases, and terrorist attacks. But to meet these and many other demands, hospitals must stretch already-tight resources. At a time when 25 percent of hospitals have negative total margins and 65 percent are losing money providing services to Medicare patients, now is not the time for the kind of reductions this legislation could impose.

We urge you to reject this approach, and protect health care services for America’s elderly, disabled, and poor.

Sincerely,

Rick Pollack
Executive Vice President

