

UPDATE



# neurosurgery

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## **Neurosurgeons Applaud Reintroduction of Legislation to Improve Prior Authorization for Seniors**

Washington, DC— Today, the American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS) and the Congress of Neurological Surgeons (CNS), leading members of the Regulatory Relief Coalition (RRC), applauded the bipartisan reintroduction of the **Improving Seniors' Timely Access to Care Act** ([S 1816](#)/ [HR 3514](#)). This critical legislation would streamline and modernize the prior authorization process in Medicare Advantage (MA) plans, while also adding meaningful program integrity provisions to ensure the MA functions as intended.

Introduced by U.S. Senators Roger Marshall, MD (R-KS), and Mark Warner (D-VA), along with Representatives Mike Kelly (R-PA), Suzan DelBene (D-WA), Ami Bera, MD (D-CA), and John Joyce, MD (R-PA), the bill garnered a total of 48 Senators and 74 Representatives as original cosponsors upon reintroduction.

"Strengthening oversight of prior authorization in Medicare Advantage ensures the program delivers on its promise of timely care for America's seniors," said **Alexander A. Khelessi, MD, MBA, Chair of the AANS/CNS Washington Committee**. "Today, patients with urgent neurologic conditions face delays and denials that risk permanent disability or worse. We thank the House and Senate champions for their continued bipartisan leadership to ensure that medical urgency, not administrative process, guides access to care. Congress has the opportunity to deliver a meaningful victory for seniors by swiftly sending this legislation to the president's desk. Let's allow surgeons to focus on their patients."

The bill represents the culmination of a multi-year, evidence-based effort led by physicians, patients, and other health care stakeholders. It has already shaped recent federal policy, with CMS [proposing](#) or [finalizing](#) several rules that were modeled in large part on the legislation. These regulatory actions significantly reduced the bill's projected cost. Although it previously passed the House unanimously and earned broad bipartisan support in both chambers, earlier budget concerns stalled its progress. Following targeted refinements, the updated bill received a zero-cost score from the Congressional Budget Office in October 2024, clearing the path for final passage.

Specifically, the legislation would:

- Establish an electronic prior authorization process for MA plans, including standardized transactions and clinical attachments.
- Increase transparency around MA prior authorization requirements and utilization.
- Enable real-time decisions for routinely approved items and services, and clarify CMS' authority to establish response timeframes for all e-PA requests.
- Expand beneficiary protections to improve enrollee experiences and outcomes.
- Require federal agencies to report to Congress on program integrity efforts and ways to improve the e-PA process.

The RRC has served as a principal architect and champion of these reforms, advocating on behalf of the more than 34 million seniors enrolled in Medicare Advantage plans and the members who care for them.

In the previous Congress, more than 500 national and state organizations – including those representing patients, providers, Medicare Advantage plans, and the medical device, pharmaceutical, and health IT industries – endorsed the legislation. That momentum continues, with over 140 organizations already reaffirming their support this Congress.

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*The **American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS)**, founded in 1931, and the **Congress of Neurological Surgeons (CNS)**, founded in 1951, are the two largest scientific and educational associations for neurosurgical professionals in the world. These groups represent over 10,000 neurosurgeons worldwide. Neurological surgery is the medical specialty concerned with the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of disorders that affect the entire nervous system, including the spinal column, spinal cord, brain and peripheral nerves. For more information, please visit [www.aans.org](http://www.aans.org), [www.cns.org](http://www.cns.org) and [www.neurosurgery.org](http://www.neurosurgery.org).*