

Nunes bill on the way to nat.'l health policy

Leaders in the House of Representatives put a bill introduced by Rep. Devin Nunes on the fast track to becoming law by folding it into the national Medicare prescription drug bill.

Mr. Nunes introduced H.R. 2471, which would allow hospitals to triage patients who come through their doors and refer them to non-urgent clinics and health care centers. The legislation would ease crowding, shorten emergency room waits and, for those who lack health insurance or a family doctor, introduce needy patients to low- or no-cost clinics.

A day after it was introduced, the language from that bill was adopted into the Medicare Prescription Drug and Modernization Act of 2003 and passed out of the House Committee on Ways and Means.

"This is an exciting and

very welcome turn of events for the hospitals in my district, which are struggling to keep up with the numbers of patients flooding their emergency rooms," Mr. Nunes said.

The emergency room relief bill introduced by Mr. Nunes is one of several recommendations to come from a recent health care delivery summit in Visalia with more than 150 community and health care leaders.

Several other recommendations from that summit were presented to the House Committee on Ways and Means and have been included in the Medicare reform bill, including increased assistance to hospitals in rural areas and increased reimbursement rates for providers who care for government-insured patients, among others.

"It is very gratifying to know that we here in the



Dr. Phillip Hinton, CEO of Community Medical Center in Fresno meets with Rep. Devin Nunes in Washington, D.C.

Central Valley are having a positive affect on health care legislation aimed at improving quality and access to medicine around the country," Mr. Nunes said.

The Medicare Prescription Drug and Modernization Act of 2003 strengthens the Medicare program through provisions such as preventive and wellness services, as well as by introducing

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Quick Facts

H.R. 1, Prescription Drug and Medicare Modernization Act of 2003 -- Voluntary Rx Drug Benefit Available to ALL Medicare Beneficiaries: \$250 deductible; \$251-\$2,000: 80% coverage, 20% cost-sharing; Catastrophic protection after \$3,500 out-of-pocket (100% of costs covered); Affordable premium around \$35 per month or about \$1 a day

Nunes improves health care for uninsured workers

Rep. Devin Nunes voted in favor of a bill to improve access and reduce costs of quality health care to Americans who need it most – employees of small businesses.

The *Small Business Health Fairness Act*, (H.R. 660) passed the House of Representatives with a bipartisan vote of 262-162.

"The epidemic facing uninsured Americans is not just a health problem, it's a quality of life problem," said Mr. Nunes. "Hardworking families are unable to get affordable health care due to skyrocketing costs. For a nation that boasts the

world's largest and most productive economy, that's unacceptable."

The Small Business Health Fairness Act will:

Provide quality health care to millions. 41 million Americans are without health insurance; nearly 60 percent are either employed by small businesses or dependent on someone who is employed by a small business.

Lower the cost of health insurance for employers. Small businesses will be able to create association health plans and purchase health insurance collectively for their workers at a lower

cost. Savings to employers and employees could range from nine to as much as 25 percent in reduced premiums.

Expand and improve health coverage. Requires association health plans to cover specific diseases, maternal and newborn hospitalization, and mental health illnesses.

Reduce the number of uninsured Americans. Recent studies show that up to 8.5 million uninsured workers and dependents could gain coverage immediately under the congressional plan.