

UPDATE

neurosurgery

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Neurosurgeons Encouraged by Ways and Means Committee Surprise Medical Bills Framework
Groups urge Congress not to rush to pass legislation this year to allow more time to get the policy right.

Washington, DC—Today, the American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS) and the Congress of Neurological Surgeons (CNS) expressed appreciation for the efforts of Ways and Means Committee chair **Richard Neal** (D-Mass.) and ranking member **Kevin Brady** (R-Texas) to work on a bipartisan solution to end “surprise” medical bills. As previously reported, to fully protect patients from surprise insurance gaps, the AANS and the CNS believe that Congress must adopt legislation that accomplishes the following:

- Protects patients, so they are only responsible for their in-network cost-sharing amounts, including deductibles, when receiving unanticipated medical care;
- Safeguards patient access to care by requiring provider networks that are adequate to meet patients’ medical needs;
- Ensures reasonable provider rates, and any benchmark payment rate based on median or mean in-network contract rates or some percentage of Medicare is unacceptable;
- Establishes a fair, accessible and equitable independent dispute resolution (IDR) process to resolve payment disputes between health plans and providers — and access to IDR must not be restricted to claims above a specific dollar amount, nor should the IDR process include a “cooling off” period; and
- Instructs arbiters to determine appropriate payment rates based on, among other things, commercially reasonable rates for comparable services in the same geographic region utilizing an independent and transparent commercial insurance claims database.

“The time to end surprise medical bills is now,” said **Ann R. Stroink**, MD, FAANS, a practicing neurosurgeon from Bloomington, Illinois, and chair of the AANS/CNS Washington Committee.

“However, Congress must implement a thoughtful and balanced approach that will protect patients from unanticipated medical bills for out-of-network care, while at the same time facilitating a process to quickly, efficiently and fairly resolve physician and health plan billing disputes,” she added.

Dr. Stroink concluded, “The AANS and CNS urge Congress not to include surprise medical bill legislation in any last-minute, year-end package, and we look forward to working with the Ways and Means Committee and others in Congress in the New Year to advance bipartisan legislation that will protect patients, improve transparency, diminish the market dominance of health plans, and help ensure that patients have timely access to the physician of their choice.”

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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 8,000 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 or www.cns.org, read our blog www.neurosurgeryblog.org, follow us on [Twitter](https://twitter.com) or connect with us on [Facebook](https://facebook.com).