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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-4501**

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**HOUSE LEADERSHIP PROMISES SANDERS VOTE ON GAG RULE LEGISLATION**

Rep. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) received a commitment from the House Leadership last night that gag rule legislation Sanders has strongly pushed in Congress will be scheduled for a vote on the House floor. The promise to Sanders came from House Majority Leader Dick Armey (R-TX) during a late night colloquy on the House floor between Sanders and Armey. Armey, who is responsible for scheduling votes in the House, assured Sanders there will be a vote this year on a bill to end HMO "gag rules" which limit what doctors may say to their patients.

Legislation, the "Patient Right to Know Act" or HR 2976, was introduced by Congressmen Greg Ganske (R-IA), Ed Markey (D-MA), and Sanders in February. That bill would end many managed care insurers' practice of forcing doctors to sign so-called "gag clauses" which restrict what they may discuss with their patients.

In one example, last year Kaiser Permanente of Ohio told its doctors not to discuss possible treatments with patients before being authorized by the HMO's consultants. Such clauses have been seriously challenged as conflicting with medical ethics and a patient's right to know his or her complete treatment options. The Ganske-Markey-Sanders bill has been endorsed by the American Medical Association, the American Association of Retired Persons, Consumers Union, and dozens of other medical and consumers' groups.

"These insidious clauses threaten the core of successful health care, sound doctor-patient relationships," Sanders said. "Half the battle was securing a commitment to allow a vote on this issue, because very few politicians will be willing to stand up and defend this outrageous practice."

Sanders received the commitment from Armey after negotiations throughout the day, in which Sanders agreed to withdraw an amendment to the Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill that would have ended gag rules under Medicare and Medicaid managed care. In return, Armey promised to schedule a vote on the bill as soon as possible. "I understand the gentleman's concern that the bill be moved quickly enough to allow action by both houses before the end of the session, and I will seek to accomplish that," said Armey in the late-night colloquy.

Sanders was willing to trade a vote on the amendment yesterday for a vote on the entire bill in the future, because the bill will eliminate gag rules in **all** health insurance, not just Medicare and Medicaid.

"I am delighted with this first step towards protecting patients from abuses under managed care," Sanders said. "In the coming weeks, I will keep working to ensure HMOs do not put profits before patients."

Rep. Markey today commended Sanders for his leadership on this critical patient protection issue. "With his amendment, Rep. Sanders has helped to move the process forward, bringing Congress closer to passing legislation I have introduced and he has cosponsored banning the use of gag rules to restrict doctor-patient communications in all health plans before the end of the year. I look forward to continuing to work with Rep. Sanders to eradicate this dangerous practice once and for all."