

Holding the United States Preventive Services Task Force Responsible



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On Thursday, June 21, Representatives Marcia Blackburn (R-Tennessee), John Barrow (D-Georgia), Dr. Donna Christensen (D-U.S. Virgin Islands) and Lee Terry (R-Nebraska) introduced HR 5998, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) Transparency and Accountability Act of 2012. This legislation makes significant changes to the USPSTF that should ultimately result in a fairer, more open approach to the panel recommendations for preventive services, including cancer screening.

The AUA worked closely with the office of Congresswoman Blackburn throughout the legislative process that resulted in the introduction of this bill. We are proud to support this bill and believe that it will ensure a more balanced approach to panel deliberations, protecting not only the access of men to prostate cancer screening services but also the access of women to screening services such as mammography.

While we as urologists have been primarily focused on USPSTF recommendations for screening, it is important to remember that the Accountable Care Act gave the USPSTF broad powers to regulate all preventive services, including mammography and colonoscopy. Indiscriminant limitations of services such as these could have similar negative effects on public health for existing recommendations concerning prostate cancer screening.

The bill would ensure balanced representation of different disciplines on the USPSTF, including specialists and key stakeholders. Panel members would be appointed through a public notice and comment process, and appropriately screened for conflict of interest. In addition, the panel would be required to seek the opinion of external subject matter experts, providing it with the perspective that it lacked during its deliberations on prostate cancer screening. The bill would also require that the draft analytical plan of the USPSTF be made available for public review and comment. This would ensure that the literature review was comprehensive and key studies were not omitted, as was the case in the prostate cancer screening recommendations. Finally, the bill would strike language that directly ties Medicare coverage of a particular preventive service to the grade given by the USPSTF, returning the panel to its original scientific mission.

Legislative efforts such as this are key to the AUA strategy to protect the access of men to prostate cancer screening. We continue to believe that men should have the right to be properly informed of the risks and benefits of prostate specific antigen testing and should be screened if they believe that it is in their best interest.

Now is the time to contact your local representative or senator and ask them to support HR 5998. The AUA Government Relations and Advocacy group is here to help you in these efforts. Please contact Sandie Preiss, the AUA Director of Government Relations and Advocacy (spreiss@auanet.org) if you need assistance with this important task. ♦