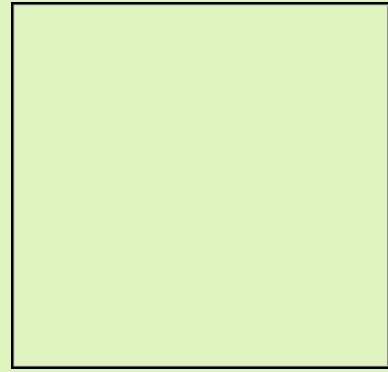


The POA BULLETIN

The Property Owners' Association of The Villages



Issue 30.08

Champion of Residents' Rights Since 1975

August,
2004

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On the One Sumter Issue, The POA Advises Residents To Cast Their Vote "No"

Villagers voting in Sumter County will have a most important issue to vote on in the election scheduled for Tuesday, August 31, 2004. Voters need to make a

special effort to understand the issues and ramifications of the One Sumter proposal.

One Sumter is a proposal to have all five Sumter County commissioners elected in a county-wide election rather than just by the voters in their individual home districts, as is now the case. Candidates would still have to live in their respective districts.

Proponents of this proposal say that these commissioners make decisions for the entire county and therefore should be elected by all voters in the county. The suggestion is that Villagers will be disadvantaged or denied equity if One Sumter is not passed.

Opponents of this proposal say that the five districts have issues and situations particular to their separate localities, and they need their own commissioners to represent their local views. This is the way the Florida and U. S. Senates and Houses are elected.

Some of the debate in the media about One Sumter has been, at times, useful, biased, emotional, and even plain wrong. Frankly, the amount of biased opinions circulating about this issue is amazing and disturbing.

The POA examined this issue carefully and recommends a "no" vote - a vote against the One Sumter proposal.

The POA believes the information and dialogue listed below and makes this recommendation for the following reasons:

1. Possibly Not Good for Residents - The POA believes that the One Sumter proposal would be good for the developer of The Villages and not necessarily good for the residents of The Villages.

As a prime example, we can cite the controversy within this last year about the proposed 1,100 unit apartment complex on Highway 101 on the west side of The Villages. A large number of residents were adamantly opposed to that housing development and demonstrated strongly at the Sumter County commissioners meeting. The POA has long suspected that The Villages developer was behind that proposal and was willing to push the issue even though many residents were opposed. The Sumter County commissioners voted 3-2 against the proposal. Had One Sumter been in effect, we have no doubt that the apartment complex would have been approved by a developer-backed board of commissioners in a 5-0 vote.

We believe that One Sumter would result in five commissioners voting the developer's party line and what would be good for the developer rather than good for residents.

For a similar example, look at the developer's methods on the sale of common property to the VCCDD supervisors. Residents are not given a voice in those decisions, even though residents have to pay back the millions of dollars of debt issued to pay for the purchases approved by the developer's hand-picked VCCDD supervisors in 5-0 votes.

What the developer wants, the developer gets, and residents have no say in the process.

And, what the developer wants is not necessarily good for residents of The Villages.

2. Smear Campaign - The POA believes that The Villages developer and the VCCDD have waged a classic smear campaign against two Sumter County commissioners who have been demonized and unfairly attacked by The Villages media machine. We believe that the developer wants to eliminate this opposition. Thus the smear campaign against these two commissioners whom the developer wants to neutralized with One Sumter.

Consider these examples:

On the Library issue, for example, Commissioner Roberts was characterized as the malcontent who single-handedly vetoed the idea of a library for The Villages. Actually, it was Roberts who discovered that The Villages developer had promised, according to his development plans filed with the county, to build a library. Roberts said "no" to the idea of Sumter County building the library and insisted that the developer build it as promised. Why should Sumter County spend money on something that the developer had promised to do? The developer's response was to demonize Roberts and paint him as the bad guy who single handedly vetoed the library idea for Village residents.

On the redistricting effort, the POA believes that the developer wanted three of the five commissioners for The Villages on the last redistricting required by law. However, the law requires the redistricting be done using the latest census which was done in 2000. That census showed The Villages deserved one commissioner at that time - not three. Again, Roberts was smeared as the bad guy who single-handedly vetoed the idea of more commissioners for The Villages. In the final vote, commissioners approved the redistricting plan, and two Villages commissioners, by a 5-0 vote. If Roberts' plan was so unfair for The Villages, why did it pass by a 5-0 vote?

On the road maintenance agreement, the Sumter County staff properly noted that the original contract incorrectly gave The Villages credit for mowing about 55 miles of residential streets. The Villages CDDs still wanted the \$5,000 per mile per year mowing payment, even though they knew that the districts did no work for the payment. One could make the case that the CDD's actions and claims here were unethical, if not fraudulent. Sumter County commissioners finally agreed to \$4,487 per mile per year for the 8.2 miles where the CDDs actually do the work and for which payment is justified.

Surprisingly, Pete Wahl still wanted \$32,000 per mile per year and thus exposed his ridiculous position. If you were a commissioner, how could you justify giving any community in the county a patently ridiculous payment like this for a service? It is true that the times mowed was reduced to seven from the Villages scheduled thirty-five. However, it is The Villages choice to plant better grass and mow it thirty-five times - the common county practice is to mow roadsides only seven times per year. And, Lake and Marion County refused to pay for mowing and told The Villages to maintain its own grass.

The Sumter County commissioners were excoriated by The Villages and the CDDs for being conscientious stewards of the county's funds. Sure, none of us likes the idea of losing the revenues and paying more. But, what's fair is fair. We think one of the first things a One Sumter board of commissioners would do is to reinstate the roadside maintenance give-a-way to The Villages which is unfair to all residents of Sumter County.

3. Counterbalance to the Developer - Villages residents need a counter-balance to what we see as the whims and political power of the developer. This is a matter of trust. The POA would trust an independent board acting in good

faith for the benefit of all.

For example, the commissioners opposed the developer's ideas on fire stations, fire safety, and set-back requirements that would have compromised safety for all Villagers. The developer wants to optimize profits; the commissioners want to optimize safe living conditions for county residents.

On this matter of trust, we like an independent board of commissioners looking over the shoulder of any developer. Why else do you have building codes, electrical requirements, and standards that are now enforced by county officials? What if a developer could change these at will suit his own purposes to accommodate cheaper or faster building activities?

4. Local Representation - There is a tradition in this country of local problems handled by local people and their representatives. During election time, we hear often of local town hall meetings and the local caucus all across the nation. U.S. Senators are elected individually by 50 states; U.S. Representatives are elected in over 400 separate districts. All U.S. Senators are not elected by everybody in the U.S.; neither are all U.S. Representatives. The same is true for the Florida Senate and House.

The concept of local representation and election has been part of our national political fabric for over two centuries. Why should Sumter County be any different? If all Florida Senators and Representatives were elected in state-wide elections, Sumter County voters would never get the attention of any elected state official who would have to look for votes in the big cities.

5. Disenfranchise Voters - One Sumter would effectively disenfranchise voters in most parts of Sumter County outside The Villages. The POA doesn't think this would be fair or equitable for the those residents.

The POA feels that when The Villages deserves three commissioners based on population, then we should and will have the majority. But, stealing the majority with the One Sumter gimmick seems inequitable and not consistent with the concept of fair play.

Finally, the POA thinks One Sumter would work this way:

Within one or two elections after implementing One Sumter, it would become obvious that any candidate wanting a chance to be elected would have to come to The Villages seeking votes and would have to genuflect in front of the developer and seek his approval.

Only approved candidates, willing to vote the developer's interests, would get the benefit of the developer's political "machine." That machine would mobilize Sumter County employees working for The Villages, or one of its business partners or suppliers, and make it perfectly clear that their jobs depended on their vote for the favored candidate. Remember what was thought to be the lock-step political pressures on employees during the CEEB campaigns two years ago.

Also, the VHA would be mobilized for the same vote. Remember that Don Burgess, president of the VHA, is also on the board of the One Sumter organization.

And then The Villages media machine would kick in with massive advertising, editorial, and routine news reporting favorable to the anointed candidates.

The predictable result: 5-0 votes on every developer favorable issue. And, developer-friendly issues are not necessarily resident-friendly issues. Remember the 1,100 apartments on Highway 101. This proposal will most likely get resurrected by a newly elected One Sumter board of Commissioners.

Then the POA believes that the developer would have a free hand to do whatever he wanted - so as to optimize profits. And, this would not be necessarily good for Villagers or the other voters in the county.

In Summary, the POA believes that One Sumter is not in the best interests of Villages residents or Sumter County residents. We urge all fair-minded voters to vote against the proposal.

Then, when the next redistricting is implemented, The Villages will probably gain the majority vote in the Sumter County Board of Commissioners. But, at least then it will be fair and square based on population growth. Then we will have earned the majority.

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Is This Hypocrisy In Action?

On several occasions in the past, the POA Bulletin has written about Village officials or residents urging us to exercise our right to vote in county, state, and federal elections. This always seemed odd to us, given that Village residents can't vote for the top Villages officials in our government.

We have always shied away from using the word "hypocrisy" because it seemed too harsh and not very respectable.

But, enough of this kid-glove approach to what can properly be called hypocrisy.

Case in point: Pete Wahl's recent columns in the Daily Sun Thursday Supplement. The first headline reads: "Use Your American Birthright to Vote." "...wouldn't it be great," he writes, "if everyone who benefits from their birthright or naturalized freedoms not only registered to vote, but actually turned out at the polls...."

Mr. Wahl doesn't tell you that you can't vote for either him or any of the hand-picked-by-the-developer supervisors of the VCCDD who make all of the big money decisions in The Villages. These are the decisions that saddle residents with the obligation to repay millions of dollars of debt used to purchase common facilities from the developer at inflated prices.

Please, Mr. Wahl, if you were speaking fairly, you would explain your quotes in reference to our situation here in The Villages. So, please don't wrap yourself in the American flag, asking us to vote, when you know we can't vote for you.

Mr. Wahl also commented in a July 8th column about the One Sumter proposal to allow all Sumter County residents to vote for all five Sumter County

commissioners. He makes the point that if you can't vote for all five, then they are "not compelled to be responsive to you." Furthermore, you would be deprived of most of "your voting rights."

Let's turn this around and examine Mr. Wahl's comments in relation to his position and the VCCDD supervisors. Mr. Wahl should probably agree, based on his statements, that he and the VCCDD supervisors are "not compelled to be responsive to" residents since we cannot vote for them.

And, in Mr. Wahl's words, aren't residents deprived of "their voting rights" here in The Villages central government?

So, let's not pretend that we have a nice All-American relationship with Mr. Wahl and the VCCDD supervisors. Because we are not able to exercise our great "American Birthright to Vote" when it comes to Mr. Wahl and the VCCDD supervisors.

So, let's get back to the word "hypocrisy." Yes, it really fits.

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Apologies For Insulting Language

This column is our effort to apologize to the people and officials of Sumter County who were insulted in a most crude way by several public officials of The Villages.

In a recent meeting about Sumter County road maintenance payments, Mr. Seymour Rosenblatt, chairman of The Villages CDD #1, threatened county officials with the One Sumter initiative by saying that if the proposal passed, "They'll go back to hillbilly heaven."

This statement is so offensive to fair minded people that we have to ask Mr. Rosenblatt for an apology and for his immediate resignation from the CDD #1 Board of Supervisors. We just cannot have people with this Neanderthal mentality and boorish mouth serving in public positions within our community.

The second offensive statement was reportedly made by Mr. Dick Vaughn, supervisor in CDD #2 and president of the Villages Sumter County Republican club. He said that if it was not for The Villages, then Sumter County people would "still be using horses, buggies, and dirt roads." This is another offensive and insulting statement for which an apology is due. Mr. Vaughn should also resign from his post as a CDD supervisor.

There was an additional imprudent statement made by Mr. Nick Jones, chairman of the board of CDD #2. Jones said, in reference to the roadside maintenance issue, that if the discussions didn't go our way, that the "cash

cow" of The Villages might turn into a "raging bull." This statement was Mr. Jones' way of being clever, but at least the statement was not personally denigrating to any individuals. Still, the statement was a threat and was inflammatory and not helpful in the discussions. An apology is also due here.

All Villagers should be embarrassed and saddened by these statements.

If The Villages wants to be, as it should be, a good neighbor within our community and the surrounding area, we cannot tolerate unwise, demeaning, and ignorant statements like these from our officials. No wonder there is animosity directed toward Villages residents from elsewhere in our county.

Shame on us.

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Roberts is Misquoted

Pete Wahl in his July 22nd Sun column characterized the Sumter County Commissioners, Jim Roberts in particular, as wanting to target Villagers in a rampage of taxation on The Villages cash cow. Roberts has vehemently denied the Wahl accusations as outrageous with misinformation and lies.

We suspect Wahl is twisting facts to his advantage so as to promote the One Sumter initiative. We think this is dirty politics.

We hope Villagers look past all the self-serving comments and carefully scrutinize everybody's statements for truth and facts.

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Where Did All The Money Go?

The POA has received several questions about the roadside maintenance payment reduction from Sumter County. The most asked questions are: "Where did the money go?" And, "Can we get the money back?"

The overpayment of about \$300,000 per year was delivered to the three CDDs in Sumter County: CDD #s 1, 2, and 3 covering Sumter County north of Highway 466.

Each of these CDDs accepted the funds (about \$100,000 each) as general revenue. The funds were used to pay the general operating expenses of each district. Consequently, the annual assessments in each of these three CDDs were lower than they otherwise would have been if this money had not been provided.

Therefore, the funds were used and there is no money left to be recovered. If you wanted to press the point, the beneficiaries of the money were the residents of the three CDDs.

If anybody could make a case to recover something, it would be Sumter County for the annual overpayment to the three districts going back to 1999. But, the commissioners appear willing to honor the contract for services that was based on a calculation by a Sumter County staff member. The \$5,000 per mile was a Sumter County number.

Going forward, we have to ask whether the roughly \$300,000 reduction in annual roadside maintenance expenses in Sumter County will be reflected in a reduction in county property taxes. That should be the practical conclusion to this whole adventure.

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Latest Bob Evans Developments

The POA has heard that the developer of The Villages has decided to not build the Bob Evans restaurant at the proposed Wales Gate site.

However, this has not been confirmed at this time. We guess that the restaurant will be built at another Villages site, probably on Highway 466.

The last communication from the developer was the May 24th letter to residents in the Unit One area. In that letter, the developer mentioned that time was of the essence and requested a response within ten days. But, it is now almost two months later and the developer still has not made a general statement to residents as to the resolution of this matter.

We have heard that roughly 600 May 24th letters were sent out and that only about 200 were returned. Roughly two-thirds of these were negative on the idea of the restaurant at the Wales Gate location. Thus, the response was not the "overwhelmingly positive" signal that the developer said was needed to build the restaurant at that location.

The POA would caution residents to not assume that this matter is closed. Remember that "It is not over until it is over." The developer could still decide to "Damn the torpedoes and full steam ahead." If that happens, we will call for a meeting of the special committee, formed after a previous POA meeting, to decide on an appropriate response to the developer. So, stay tuned....

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Paradise Center Status Report: Nothing New

There is nothing new this month on the renovation of the Paradise Center.

The architects and engineers are working on another draft of the plans and we expect more information soon.

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The POA Has A New Web Site

The POA has started a web site that is available now but is still a work in progress. Check us out at www.poa4us.org - and notice that the site is an ".org" rather than a ".com".

We are still building the site. Some of the menu selections are operational now; some are not. You might especially want to check out the Bulletin listing where you can read all the stories in the Bulletin for the past year and a half.

We expect to complete more of the menu selections over the next few months. So, check back often. And, tell your friends to have a look.

We will continue to work with the Cyber Citizens For Justice web site located at the address <http://www.ccfj.net> on the internet.

Incidentally, we need some help on maintaining our site. If you are familiar with the internet and would like to help, please call Joe Gorman at 352-259-0999 to discuss this further.

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Your CDD Meetings

The various CDDs in The Villages meet once a month at the district offices at 3231 Wedgewood Lane just behind the gas station on Highway 466. Meetings are as follows:

Last Friday of the Month:

- VCCDD at 9:00 a.m.
- CDD # 1 at 11:00 a.m.
- CDD # 5 at 10:15 a.m.
- Sumter Landing at 9:45 a.m.

First Friday of the Month:

- CDD # 6 at 9:00 a.m.
- CDD # 4 at 9:30 a.m.
- CDD # 3 at 10:00 a.m.
- CDD # 2 at 11:00 a.m.

These meetings are worthwhile and show our local governments in action. Residents wanting to know what's going on or to give inputs into our governments' decision making processes should attend.

Also, the District Administrator, Mr. Pete Wahl, conducts a weekly CDD school at the district offices on Wedgewood Lane. The schools last about two hours. For the summer, the school will be once a week, on Mondays at 10:00 a.m. Contact Pete Wahl's office at 753-4508 for details.

CDD school is informative and provides a good overview of how CDDs work and are organized. The POA recommends the program. However, the POA also recommends that, after going to this, you come to a POA meeting for the rest of the story. You will not get the whole story at Pete's CDD school.

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Letter to The Editor

To: My Neighbors and others in CDD 1 (The Villages, FL):

Like the rest of you, I received my note from Pete Wahl today which indicates that because Sumter County Commissioners are giving \$100,914.00 less for maintenance/mowing of some Village roads in CDD 1, my maintenance assessment is projected to increase by \$59.99/year.

This gave me cause to call the number in his letter to ask how many homes are

in CDD 1. I was told 3427 lots. This led me to calculate that if all lots were assessed an equal amount (\$59.99) they would raise \$205,585.73, which is a lot higher than the shortfall mentioned in letter.

A second call to District Office brought the news that the average increase is about \$55, with some Homes and Villas assessed less and some more, because the determination of amount charged for maintenance of the roads that are used by all, regardless of the size of home or number of homes per acre (their method used) results in different assessments. To me, that's like charging different fees for the movies, based on your height and weight.

If you consider the fact that maintenance assessments were bringing in approximately \$850,000.00/year from CDD1 Residents before adding in amount provided by Sumter County, you can see that there is some serious money being used to mow grass that's not growing in yours or my yard.

Our last chance to be heard about this before it is enacted for CDD 1 Residents, will be at this month's Board of Supervisors CDD 1 Meeting scheduled for 11:00 AM on Friday July 30th at District Office, 3231 Wedgwood Lane, The Villages. Building is in back of Circle K/76 Gas Station on CR 466. I figure that if we say nothing, these folks are going to assume that we accept this increase without question. I don't, so I plan on being there to voice my displeasure. Please feel free to share this with other CDD 1 Residents.

CDD 2 and 3 Residents are looking at increased assessments too.

PS: If you buy into One Sumter, how about concept of ONE VILLAGES? (A town/city with a representative, elective government and an elected town/city manager who is accountable only to the resident taxpayers.)

Hank Clemens

(Editor's Note: By the time you read this, the CDD #1 meeting will have passed. We hope you were able to attend to see your government in action on this important issue. Hopefully, you can make it to the next meeting. See the schedule of all the CDD meetings listed on page 6 of this Bulletin. It is important that you attend these meetings.)

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Cheers and Jeers

Cheers - To Café Ole for years of great food and service. Thanks. Let's hope the new owners don't screw up the place as did the succession of managers at the Silver Lake Club. We don't need a pool hall on Town Square.

Jeers - To Frank Topping for not inviting Sumter County Commissioner Jim Roberts to a recent Republican Club meeting to hear Roberts' explanation of his opposition to the One Sumter proposal. Topping explained that his mind

was already made up and he therefore didn't need to hear Roberts' presentation. This is a good example of the Ostrich Syndrome.

Cheers - To The Villages Daily Sun for its monthly calendar of activities on Town Square and now for the just-opened Lake Sumter Landing. It is well-done, informative, and right on.

Jeers - To the Villages Daily Sun for their silly and childish cartoons picturing Sumter County Commissioners Roberts and Chandler. The Sun editors should act like adults and make a good example by showing more respect for our various local governments and their officials.

Cheers - To Chico Mir for his explanation in the VHA paper of the ridge-vent problem and what to do. That was a well-written article and he did a good job of explaining a difficult subject.

Jeers - To Comcast for buying out its competitor for TV cable service in Marion County. Now it is an area monopoly. Hold on to your hats for monthly fee increases.

Jeers - To the developer for that silly crashed boat on the waterfront dock of Lake Sumter Landing. The word "hokey" was meant for that. Please, send that boat off to a junkyard somewhere.

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Representative Gibson About the Hospital

The POA Bulletin published a letter in the previous issue from Mr. Hank Clemens to Representative Gibson questioning some details of the proposed law creating the North Sumter Hospital Taxing District. Below is Representative Gibson's response to Mr. Clemens:

I appreciate the time you took to inform me of your concerns and reservations on the North Sumter Hospital District.

In addressing your concerns I want to highlight a few important facts surrounding the hospital district bill, as follows:

- This is a local bill that establishes the North Sumter County Hospital District and its geographic boundaries.
- This bill will ensure continued hospital services to the residents of the district (including hospital expansion).
- The bill establishes the administrative and financial parameters of the district and includes the creation of a five-member governing Board of Trustees, all of

whom will be appointed by the Governor for six year terms.

- The bill does not create a tax. Rather the bill authorizes the levy of up to 1 mil of ad valorem tax if that tax is approved by a majority of the voters living in the district at referendum.

- The referendum must be held no later than December 2006.

- Lastly, the bill requires an annual meeting of the district following proper public notice, and requires that a comprehensive financial report be filed each year with the Clerk of Court in Sumter County.

In reference to your question on the proceeds generated from this referendum, all proceeds raised will be used for "continuing hospital services" with the exception of the funds needed for the authority's maintenance and services. In the bill it indicates that no less than 80% of the proceeds should be used for "continued hospital services," but could be more than the initial 80% and the remaining funds being used for the administrative costs of the authority. Please keep in mind that the authority is a government entity and is subject to a public hearing and financial disclosures.

Thank you for your letter and the concerns raised by yourself and those in the community. If you would like to discuss the contents of House Bill 1453 in detail please contact my district office at the number above and I will be happy to answer your questions in further detail.

Sincerely,
Hugh H. Gibson, III
Representative, District 42

(Editor's Note: The Bill reads that 100% of tax revenues, less administrative costs of the Board, will be used for "health care services." Of the amount to be used for health care services, up to 20% can be directed to any foundation associated with the hospital. From the original version of the bill, the Morse Family Foundation was identified as being eligible for the amount of up to 20%. Since "health care services" was not a defined term, it is not certain for what the Morse Foundation would be able to use the funds.)

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The POA Hall of Fame

POA members are reminded that nominations for the Hall of Fame are due October 1, 2004. Nomination forms are available at each POA general membership meeting. Five members must jointly nominate a person who has made a significant contribution to the POA in the past, but no earlier than five years ago. Nominees can be current POA members, or not; in the Villages

area, or not; and living or passed on. Don't wait much longer; the submission deadline almost here.

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The Shine Tip of the Month

ASSIGNED OR UNASSIGNED - WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU?

These terms represent how payments are made to providers of service under Medicare Part B insurance.

Providers of service who "accept assignment" agree to accept the Medicare approved amount as full payment, with Medicare normally paying 80% of this amount (assuming the Part B annual deductible has been satisfied) and the patient and/or Medicare supplement insurance paying the balance.

However, if the provider does not "accept assignment", the patient may have to pay the "limiting charge", the Medicare approved amount plus up to an additional 15%, at the time of the service. However, for durable medical equipment or supplies, there is no cap of 15% so you should search for a provider of service that does accept assignment as Medicare will still pay only 80% of the approved amount.

Whether or not the provider accepts assignment, the provider is required to send the claim to Medicare on the specified billing form. Medicare will then send a Medicare Summary Notice to the patient with a check for 80% of the approved amount to the provider if the claim is unassigned.

If the provider accepts assignment and the patient has a Medigap policy (as opposed to a Medicare supplemental policy from an employer etc. retiree health plan), the patient should have the provider put the Medigap policy number and insurance company information on the Medicare claim form. By doing this, Medicare may often send a copy of the Medicare Summary Notice to the Medigap insurance company so that the company can pay the provider as appropriate for the Medigap plan, A through J, in effect.

If the provider of service does not accept assignment, you, the patient, will probably have to send the Medicare Summary Notice to the insurance company in order to receive appropriate payment. Not only do you pay more to providers who do not accept assignment, but it may take several weeks before you are reimbursed for the payment.

For more information or to obtain free, confidential counseling on this or other health insurance matters, contact your local Elder Helpline at 1-800-963-5337 and ask for a SHINE counselor. SHINE (Serving Health Insurance Needs of

Elders), assists people on Medicare with their health insurance issues.

Offered in partnership with the Mid-Florida Area on Aging, SHINE volunteers provide individual counseling and assistance and are available for public speaking and community outreach presentations. The SHINE program is funded by a grant from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), the federal Medicare agency.

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Limerick of the Month

One Sumter, Two Sumter, Three Sumter, Four.
Who's that knocking on my door?
Why, it's Pete, Gary, and the VHA,
Pestering me to cast my vote Yea.
OK - Here's my money. Do you want more?

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