Your Senators and Representative don’t sit in on your doctor’s appointments, but perhaps they should. The 535 men and women who vote in the U.S. Capitol have enormous control over your health and well-being. And this spring, Congress begins debating everything from how much to invest in medical research to how doctors practice medicine. But are Congress’ priorities also your priorities?

- **The fate of medical research.** No one spends more on basic medical research than the federal government. This year, Congress allocated $29 billion to the National Institutes of Health. Many of the tax dollars previously given to such research have brought us closer to cures. Deaths from cancer, for example, are falling across the nation. As part of its spending cuts last year, however, Congress reduced the budget of the National Cancer Institute, part of the NIH. “A bright young investigator with a great idea now has only about a one-in-10 chance of getting funding,” says John Seffrin, head of the American Cancer Society. We may face a shortage of researchers and lifesaving clinical trials as a result of the cuts.

- **The future of health insurance.** Congress will debate whether we continue to insure Americans primarily through employers or through another system and whether health insurance will be tax deductible. It’s also Congress’ job to find a way to cover the millions of uninsured Americans.

- **The future of medicine.** Congress helps determine what type of medical care you get. Through programs like Medicare and Medicaid, it decides how much doctors and hospitals are paid and thus what type of care, including prevention, is emphasized. According to Research!America—a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to health research, the U.S. spends less than 6 cents of every health dollar on research to prevent or treat illness.

Another big question for Congress is how much to change our health-care system. For example, should it mandate a “merit pay” program to reward those who provide quality care? Should malpractice rules be changed? And do we need more doctors? Since Congress allocates money for medical

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**In the News**

**Your Congress, Your Health**

Health is the No. 1 domestic issue on the minds of Americans.

—John Porter, chairman of Research!America

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training, it influences that too.

“Improving America’s health care is foremost in the minds of many in Congress and the Administration,” says Dr. Carolyn Clancy, director of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. “Health care is the No. 1 domestic issue on the minds of Americans,” adds Research!America’s chairman, former Rep. John Porter of Illinois. “Voices from every part of our society are calling for new ideas.”

**MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD**

“All Americans deserve the best health care in the world,” says John Porter of Research!America, which is launching a new initiative called Your Congress—Your Health. “We need a conversation with Congress to achieve that goal.” Go to parade.com to tell us what health issues matter most to you. Congress will be invited to respond to a questionnaire that addresses your concerns.

**Tax Update**

Good news for procrastinators! You have extra time to file your 2006 tax returns. Since April 15 falls on a Sunday this year, taxpayers had until Monday. And now—because Monday is Emancipation Day, a holiday in Washington, D.C.—the IRS is giving everyone until Tuesday, April 17, to file.

**Extra time for last-minute filers.**

A note to our readers: Our recent article on taxes said it’s possible to combine a tuition and fees deduction with a Hope or Lifetime Learning Credit for the same student. In fact, the only way you can claim both is if the deduction is claimed for one student and the credit is claimed for a different student.