**LEGAL NEWS—HALL ADOPTS POLICY STATEMENT ON MEDICARE COVERAGE OF HEARING AIDS AND AURAL REHABILITATION**

At its last Board meeting in Bethesda, HLAA issued a 7 page white paper addressing legislation to cover hearing aids and aural rehabilitation under Medicare. They summarized in a statement that “Medicare covers hearing evaluation only if a physician orders the tests, and the purpose of the test is largely diagnostic, that is, to select the type of medical or surgical treatment needed for a hearing loss or other medical issues. Medicare explicitly excludes ‘hearing aids or examinations for the purposes of prescribing, fitting, or changing hearing aids.’ Because hearing aids are statutorily excluded under Medicare, any coverage for Medicare beneficiaries will require amending Title 18 of the Social Security Act”. The position taken was stated: “The Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) supports amending Title 18 of the Social Security Act to include coverage of hearing examinations for the purposes of prescribing, fitting or changing hearing aids, coverage of the hearing instruments themselves and aural rehabilitation”.

One of the points made to encourage the legislation was: “Numerous studies have also linked untreated hearing loss to other serious conditions which are significant issues for people, especially older Americans who rely on Medicare and who are more like to have hearing loss. It has been demonstrated that the symptoms of depression are reduced, and quality of life improved for people with hearing loss who use hearing aids.

In addition, research has indicated that the incidence of dementia can be up to five times greater for with hearing loss. Untreated hearing loss is connected to a tripling of the risk for falling, which is of particular concern to older Americans”.

The seven page policy statement with 16 footnotes can be found at:

<http://www.hearingloss.org/sites/default/files/docs/HLAA_POLICYSTATEMENT_MedicareCoverage_HearingAids_AuralRehab.pdf>