

BAUCUS HAILS SENATE BUDGET PASSAGE AS NEXT STEP TOWARD COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH REFORM

Finance Chairman says Senate vote "adds to momentum" for action this year

Washington, DC, April 2, 2009 - Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) today hailed the passage of a Senate budget resolution that makes comprehensive health care reform possible this year. The budget includes a health care "reserve fund" that will ensure a health reform bill can meet the budgetary rules when it is considered by the Senate this year. The budget resolution also provides the flexibility health reform legislation will need by requiring it to be paid for in the 11 year budget window, but not in the six year window. Under the Senate's "pay-as-you-go" rules, budget resolutions generally require legislation to be paid for over both six and 11 years. Baucus said the passage of these provisions in the budget resolution is critical to the success of health care reform.

"The Senate vote tonight adds to the tremendous momentum in Congress for comprehensive health reform this year," said Baucus. "Health care reform is an investment in America's system that will reduce costs over time. This budget recognizes that investment by allowing health reform to be paid for in the long run and that flexibility is essential to making health reform work. America's families, businesses, and health care providers are counting on Congress to lower health costs, improve the quality of care patients receive, and make sure all Americans are able to access decent coverage. I've made reforming America's broken health care system my top priority this year, and this budget resolution is another victory on the road to achieving that goal."

Baucus held ten hearings on health reform in 2008 and released a blueprint for reform last November. He and Finance Committee Ranking Member Senator Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) have said the Finance Committee will work toward a health reform bill in three areas: reforming the health care delivery system, addressing access to health care coverage, and providing financing for reform. They plan roundtables and policy "walk throughs" on each topic, with the first roundtable scheduled to take place later this month. Chairman Baucus has said the Finance Committee will vote on comprehensive health reform in June, and Congress should deliver a bill to President Obama this year.