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**BAUCUS APPLAUDS HOUSE PASSAGE OF BILL TO ENSURE SENIORS,
MILITARY FAMILIES CONTINUE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY DOCTORS**

Finance Leaders' Bill Would Ensure Doctors Can Continue Seeing Medicare, Tricare Patients

Washington, DC – Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) today applauded House passage of a bill to ensure seniors and military families will be able to continue seeing their doctors. The bill was introduced by Baucus and Finance Committee Ranking Member Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) earlier this month as part of an effort to provide both a short-term and longer-term solution to pay for the Medicare Physician Payment Formula. The legislation would ensure Medicare and Tricare, the health care program for active-duty service members, National Guard and Reserve members, retirees and their families, will continue to pay physicians who participate in those programs at current levels.

“America’s seniors and military families need to be able to see the doctors they know and trust,” said Baucus. **“This bill ensures seniors and military families in Montana and across the country will have the peace of mind of knowing they can continue to see those high-quality health professionals. We now need to work together to pass a long-term extension so we can ensure seniors and military families can continue to have access to their doctors, treatments and medicines.”**

The bill, The Physician Payment and Therapy Relief Act of 2010, would avoid a statutory cut in those payments that would otherwise go into effect on December 1. The legislation is the first in a two-part agreement that Baucus and Grassley reached to ensure patients would have more certainty about their care and physicians would have more certainty about their payments. The bill would provide a month-long extension of the current levels of the Medicare payment formula. It was passed by the Senate on November 18 and now heads to the President for his signature.

This extension would be paid for using the Medicare savings from a new Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) policy that reduces payments for multiple therapy services provided to patients in one day. This proposal would also provide relief to therapists by shrinking that reduction from 25 percent to 20 percent. The legislation would save \$1 billion, which would then be used to pay for the Medicare payment formula.

Baucus and Grassley also agreed they would together pursue a year-long fix to the formula that could be enacted before the month-long patch expires. The Finance leaders are working together to secure a mutually agreeable way to pay for the year-long cost of the physician formula as well as other extenders, and they felt confident they would find such a solution.

The Finance Committee has jurisdiction over the Medicare program and the physician payment formula, which is tied to payment levels for the Tricare program.

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