



For Immediate Release
April 21, 2009

Contact: Erin Shields
(202) 224-4515

FINANCE COMMITTEE ROUNDTABLE JUMP STARTS DIALOGUE ON HEALTH CARE REFORM SOLUTIONS

Baucus says roundtables intended to inform a comprehensive health care reform bill

Washington, DC – Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) today kicked off a series of roundtable discussions on comprehensive health care reform with a conversation among health care stakeholders on how to lower costs and improve quality in the way care is delivered to patients. The discussion addressed ways to create incentives in the Medicare program that would promote best practices, eliminate waste, facilitate better communication among providers regarding patient care through expanded health information technology, increase research on the comparative effectiveness of various treatments and tools that support evidenced-based care, and reduce fraud and abuse in federally financed health care programs.

“Right now, all of the incentives in our system encourage health care providers to deliver more care, not better care. Today’s conversation is about how to lower costs and improve quality in the system for the millions of hard-working Americans that are tired of seeing their health care costs rise faster than inflation,” said Baucus. **“Today, we deepen the discussion about how to make our system more affordable for all Americans, more efficient, and more focused on quality care. And today, we heard a wide range of voices expressing agreement that comprehensive health care reform will make Americans healthier, happier and more productive, and improve our long-term fiscal standing by saving billions of health care dollars. This discussion, as well as others to come in this series, will give Senator Grassley and me, and our fellow Committee members, the points of view, feedback, and ideas that we need to write and pass a comprehensive health care reform bill this year.”**

Participating health care policy and industry experts gave Finance Committee members insight as to some major areas that deserve attention in health care system reform, including consideration of payment options, evidence-based approaches to achieve savings, and flexibility in any eventual model so that different segments of the health care sector may adapt. On this point, panelists agreed that improved health care information technology (IT) for integration and communication among patient databases could provide that flexibility.

Baucus has made comprehensive health care reform his number one priority this year. To date, he has held over a dozen hearings on the topic and released a blueprint for reform last year. He intends to mark-up health care reform legislation in the Finance Committee in June.