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**BAUCUS REINFORCES CALL FOR INTER-AGENCY COOPERATION
TO ENSURE BENEFITS FOR WOUNDED WARRIORS**

*Finance Chair says outreach, coordination key to expediting claims,
securing benefits for nation's disabled veterans*

Washington, DC – Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont) commented today on a new Government Accountability Office (GAO) report that found the Social Security Administration's (SSA) coordination with the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) and the Department of Defense (DOD) to facilitate and process Social Security disability claims for wounded warriors had improved turnaround times and access to benefits. The report found that 7,600 of 16,000 U.S. wounded warriors who had filed a disability claim had been approved for Social Security disability benefits, and that SSA may need a legislative change in order to provide wounded warriors with benefits they are currently prevented from receiving.

"I commend SSA for working with VA and DOD to help identify, locate and deliver benefits to our disabled war veterans. These American heroes deserve every benefit we can provide, and it is imperative we continue to work toward a reduction in processing times for claims, lifting the restriction on retroactive benefits for soldiers and upgrading the paper-based system of our veterans' medical records," said Baucus. **"We will work closely with SSA to make any necessary and appropriate changes to the Social Security laws to make sure our wounded warriors receive the benefits they deserve."**

The Senate Finance Committee has jurisdiction over Social Security policy, including oversight of the Social Security Administration. Senator Baucus' health care reform plan, America's Healthy Future Act, includes a provision to establish a special enrollment period in Medicare Part B for wounded warriors that have lost military health care coverage. The full GAO report, "Social Security Disability: Additional Outreach and Collaboration on Sharing Medical Records Would Improve Wounded Warrior's Access to Benefits," may be viewed on the GAO website: <http://www.gao.gov/Products/GAO-09-762>.

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