

For Immediate Release
Wednesday, July 29, 2009

Grassley works for transparency in financial ties between doctors and industry

WASHINGTON --- Senator Chuck Grassley is asking the National Navy Medical Center for information about its policies and practices requiring military doctors to report income from the pharmaceutical, medical device and biologics industries.

Grassley said the inquiry is part of his ongoing effort to disclose these relationships to enhance transparency and, in turn, build public confidence in medical research and practice.

Grassley has conducted extensive oversight of financial relationships, especially among doctors who conduct research with the \$24 billion awarded annually in federal grants by the National Institutes of Health. Institutions receiving these federal dollars are required to track financial relationships, but Grassley has found enforcement of those requirements often to be either lax or non-existent.

Grassley also has twice sponsored reform legislation that would require payments from the drug industry to be publicly reported. Senator Herb Kohl is the cosponsor of the pending "Physician Payments Sunshine Act," S.301.

Below is the text of Grassley's letter to the Commander of the Navy Medicine National Capital Area.

July 29, 2009

Rear Admiral Matthew L. Nathan
Commander
Navy Medicine National Capital Area
National Naval Medical Center
8901 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, MD 20889

Dear Commander Nathan:

The United States Senate Committee on Finance (Finance) has jurisdiction over the Medicare and Medicaid programs and, accordingly, a responsibility to the more than 100 million Americans who receive coverage under these programs. As Ranking Member of the Finance Committee I have a duty to protect the health of all Americans and safeguard taxpayer dollars authorized and appropriated by Congress for health programs.

As part of my oversight responsibilities, I have been trying to understand the policies and practices that the military has in place requiring their physicians to report outside income. I have found a lack of transparency and discovered that some physicians are not reporting this outside income as required.

Accordingly, I request that the National Naval Medical Center respond to the following questions and requests for information. For each response, please repeat the enumerated request and follow with the appropriate answer.

- 1) A copy of your institution's policy on employee conflict of interest.
- 2) Please provide copies of conflict of interest forms filed by all physicians at your institution. The time span of this request covers January 2008 to the present.
- 3) Please provide copies of all reports of failure to report outside income by a physician at your institution. The time span of this request covers January 2004 to the present.

Thank you again for your cooperation and assistance in this matter. In cooperating with the Committee's review, no documents, records, data or information related to these matters shall be destroyed, modified, removed or otherwise made inaccessible to the Committee.

I look forward to hearing from you by no later than August 7, 2009.

Sincerely,
Charles E. Grassley of Iowa
United States Senator
Ranking Member of the Committee on Finance