



For Immediate Release
Tuesday, Oct. 6, 2009

Grassley, Fellow Finance Committee Republicans Seek Participation by Key Budget,
Tax Officials Before Voting on Health Care Bill

WASHINGTON – Sen. Chuck Grassley, ranking member of the Committee on Finance, and all nine of his fellow committee Republicans today urged the committee chairman to ensure participation by the Congressional Budget Office director and the chief of staff of the Joint Committee on Taxation when the committee is asked to consider any changes or vote on a major health care reform bill.

“Health care reform is a monumental task that will touch the life of every American,” the senators wrote to Sen. Max Baucus, chairman. “Before the Committee votes to report the legislation out of Committee, it is important that all Members have a thorough understanding of the cost of the legislation and how individuals, families, and businesses will be affected. In keeping with the President’s request that health care reform be revenue neutral over a ten-year period and reduce the growth of health care spending over the long run, it is important that Members have an opportunity to ask questions about the legislation’s deficit impact within the ten-year budget window and beyond.”

The non-partisan, expert advisers are key to answering questions about the budgetary and everyday impact of the legislation, which will cost hundreds of billions of dollars. The Republican senators said the participation by the CBO and JCT officials is consistent with the chairman’s commitments about time to review official cost estimates, which the chairman made in response to Republican senators’ questions during last week’s committee consideration of the chairman’s draft legislation.

The text of the senators’ letter follows here.

October 6, 2009

The Honorable Max Baucus
Chairman
Committee on Finance

219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Baucus:

We are writing to urge you to require the presence of Douglas Elmendorf, Director of the Congressional Budget Office ("CBO"), and Thomas Barthold, Chief of Staff of the Joint Committee on Taxation ("JCT"), when the Finance Committee reconvenes to vote on final passage of the health care bill, the *America's Healthy Future Act*. We believe it is equally important for Director Elmendorf and Mr. Barthold to be present for all other Committee markup sessions to consider further modifications, if any, to this mark, just as they participated in the initial walk-through.

Health care reform is a monumental task that will touch the life of every American. Before the Committee votes to report the legislation out of Committee, it is important that all Members have a thorough understanding of the cost of the legislation and how individuals, families, and businesses will be affected. In keeping with the President's request that health care reform be revenue neutral over a ten-year period and reduce the growth of health care spending over the long run, it is important that Members have an opportunity to ask questions about the legislation's deficit impact within the ten-year budget window and beyond.

The American public has understandably become cynical with regards to Congress passing thousand-page bills with price tags in the hundreds of billions of dollars prior to examining the legislative documents. Providing Members the opportunity to ask questions of Director Elmendorf and Mr. Barthold before the committee votes would be in keeping with the tradition of transparency in the Finance Committee. It is also in keeping with your commitment, which we appreciate, that, "in good faith there will be time to look at the score," and that we will have the opportunity as a committee to respond to issues raised by CBO and JCT before the vote. Moreover, it would send a signal to the American public that we take our duty seriously to understand how legislation will affect their lives prior to voting on reporting any legislation out of Committee.

Sincerely,

Charles E. Grassley

Orrin G. Hatch

Olympia J. Snowe

Jon Kyl

Jim Bunning

Mike Crapo

Pat Roberts

John Ensign

Michael B. Enzi

John Cornyn

Cc: Douglas W. Elmendorf
Thomas A. Barthold