



The Numbers on a Full and Transparent Process: The Senate Finance Committee and Health Care Reform

During the Senate floor debate, some Senators have claimed the health reform process has moved too quickly, without the opportunity for input from both sides of the aisle. But, much like the HELP Committee process, the Finance Committee consideration of health reform was a comprehensive discussion with input from both sides of the aisle. For more than a year, Chairman Baucus led the Finance Committee through a full and transparent process to consider health care reform legislation. Beginning more than a year ago, the Finance Committee held a series of hearings on health reform. And in June of last year, Senators Baucus and Grassley held a bipartisan health reform summit at the Library of Congress. This year, the Committee released three bipartisan health care reform policy papers and held several day-long Member meetings to discuss the topic. These numbers tell a story of unprecedented transparency and an unwavering commitment to working with members and stakeholders to ensure an open and constructive discussion on health care reform.

The Numbers on Laying the Groundwork for Reform

06.16.08 Date of "Prepare for Launch: Health Care Reform Summit 2008" - On June 16, 2008, Chairman Baucus and Ranking Member Grassley brought some of the best minds together to discuss health care reform. In his opening remarks, Chairman Baucus emphasized, "Today is an opportunity to learn."

On November 12, 2008, The Washington Post called the release of Chairman Baucus's "Call to Action: Health Reform 2009" white paper "striking in both its timing and scope...Rarely, if ever, has a lawmaker with his clout moved so early -- eight days after the election of a new president -- to press for such an enormous undertaking."

11 Number of Hearings in the Finance Committee's Series on Health Care Reform in 2008 - On May 6, 2008, Chairman Baucus convened the first of 11 hearings to help members get a common understanding of the health care crisis and lay the groundwork for passing a bill in the 111th Congress.

11.12.08 Date of "Call to Action: Health Reform 2009" Blueprint - On November 12, 2008, Chairman Baucus releases an 89-page blueprint for health care reform. The blueprint offered a comprehensive framework for a health care reform bill.

The Numbers on Building a Common Understanding

3 Number of Roundtable Discussions with Senate Finance Committee Members and Invited Guests - In April and May of this year, Chairman Baucus and Ranking Member Grassley convened bipartisan roundtable discussions on each of the three major areas of reform: delivery system reform, insurance coverage, and options for financing reform.

On April 30, 2009, the New York Times reported, "In setting forth detailed "policy options" and inviting public comment, Mr. Baucus and Mr. Grassley set a precedent for openness."

3 Number of Papers Outlining Options for Health Care Reform - In conjunction with the roundtable discussions, Senators Baucus and Grassley issued three sets of bipartisan policy papers outlining options for improving quality, expanding coverage, and paying for reform. These papers were made public and posted on the Committee's website.

- 31 Number of “Gang of Six” Bipartisan Meetings on Health Care Reform** - In an attempt to forge consensus, Chairman Baucus convened 31 meetings beginning in June through September of this year with a bipartisan group of Finance Committee members. These meetings, which stretched over a span of 63 hours, included three Republicans and three Democrats.
- 142 Number of Member Meetings on Health Care Reform** - Since November 2008, Chairman Baucus has held more than 142 meetings – both one-on-one and in groups – to discuss health care reform with members on both sides of the aisle. In all, those meetings added up to more than 150 hours of discussions.

The Numbers on Leading Change in an Historic Committee Markup

- 6 Number of Days the Bill was Available Before the Markup** - The Chairman’s Mark was posted online at the Finance Committee’s website on Wednesday, September 16 – a full six days before the markup and four days longer than Committee rules require.

On May 18, 2009, Politico reported on the Chairman’s efforts to build consensus noting “[the Chairman’s] frequent progress reports to reporters always include some discussion of keeping peace in the delicate alliance of Republicans, Democrats, industry, labor, physicians and consumer advocates.”

- 564 Total Number of Amendments Posted Online Before the Markup** – For the first time in history, the Committee posted every amendment submitted to the clerk online on Saturday, September 19. Debate on the Chairman’s Mark did not begin until Tuesday, September 22, giving members and the public time to review the amendments and prepare for the markup.
- 135 Number of Amendments Considered During the Markup** – The Committee considered 135 amendments during the eight day markup. Of those, 41 were accepted and 55 were rejected by the Committee; the remaining were ruled non-germane or withdrawn. Prior to the markup, Chairman Baucus accepted 122 amendments as part of the modified mark, 26 of which came from his Republican colleagues.
- 8 Number of Days the Committee Spent Marking Up the Bill** – The Committee spent eight days considering amendments, working well past 10 PM on most of those days. The markup was the longest the Committee has completed on a single bill in 22 years.
- 11 Number of Days the Final Bill was Available Before the Vote** – On October 2, a full 11 days prior to the Committee vote on the America’s Healthy Future Act, the Chairman posted the legislation as amended for review prior to the final committee vote.
- 14-9 The Final Vote to Favorably Report “America’s Healthy Future Act” Out of Committee** – On October 13, the Finance Committee passed the “America’s Healthy Future Act” with a vote of 14-9. The milestone put Congress on track to deliver on a vision of health care reform the Chairman shares with the President and the majority of Americans.