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## **BAUCUS BILL TO PROTECT KIDS, PREVENT CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT WILL BECOME LAW**

*Finance Chairman's Protect Our Kids Act Will Organize New Task Force to Review Child Welfare System*

**Washington, DC** – Last night, the U.S. Senate passed Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus' (D-Mont.) legislation to develop a national strategy for reducing child deaths resulting from abuse and neglect. The Protect Our Kids Act, which was co-sponsored by Sens. John Kerry (D-Mass.), Susan Collins (R-Maine), Ben Cardin (D-Md.), Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.), Olympia Snowe (R-Maine) and Kent Conrad (D-N.D.), will create a special task force to study and evaluate federal, state and private child welfare systems and provide policy recommendations to prevent child maltreatment. The House of Representatives has already passed an identical bill, so the bill now heads to the President's desk for signature into law.

**"America's children are our most precious resource and represent the future of this nation. We must take every possible step to protect them and keep them safe,"** Senator Baucus said. **"More must be done to eliminate child abuse and related deaths, and this task force will point us towards new, meaningful solutions to make sure every child is safe."**

The national task force will be comprised of 12-15 child welfare administrators, child welfare practitioners, law enforcement officers and other experts in the field of child abuse prevention. It will be required to undertake a comprehensive review of the nation's child welfare system and report its findings to the president and Congress.

More than six million children are abused or neglected in America every year, most of whom are less than four years old, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. In fiscal year 2011, 1,545 children in the United States were reported to have died from abuse and neglect, and many experts believe that the actual number may be significantly higher.

According to Child Protection Services data, Montana reported zero fatalities from child abuse and neglect last year, but gaps in data between agencies and in the reporting mean the number is likely higher.

**"It's going to take more coordination between Child Protection Services and agencies across the country to get a true sense of the extent of this problem and develop solutions,"** Senator Baucus said. **"We need to share data and employ every available resource to make sure kids in Montana and across the nation are safe."**

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