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## **BAUCUS PICKS MONTANA LEADER FOR SPOT ON SOCIAL SECURITY ADVISORY BOARD**

*Helena's Bernadette Franks-Ongoy Fights for Rights of Those with Disabilities*

**Washington, DC** – Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.) today selected Bernadette Franks-Ongoy, a leading disability rights advocate in Montana, to be a member of the Social Security Advisory Board (SSAB).

**“Bernie has years of experience working with people with disabilities. She has dedicated much of her life to empowering them and helping break down barriers,”** Senator Baucus said. **“Her work makes a real difference in the lives of people with disabilities. Bernie has tremendous determination and will make a real contribution to the Advisory Board.”**

Franks-Ongoy is currently executive director of Disability Rights Montana where she advocates for equal rights protection for Montanans with disabilities.

A native of Hawaii, Franks-Ongoy graduated from Chaminade University in Honolulu and the University of San Diego School of Law. Her past legal experience includes serving as the Deputy Corporation Counsel for the City and County of Honolulu and the Attorney and Director of Programs for the Protection and Advocacy System in Hawaii.

Franks-Ongoy moved to Helena, Montana in 2000 to take a position as executive director of Disability Rights Montana. She was only supposed to be in the state for two years but fell in love with Montana.

**“Big Sky Country is amazingly beautiful. I love Montana and am passionate about my work,”** Franks-Ongoy said. **“Equality for people with disabilities is like breathing air. We all breathe the same air and all people should share the same rights.”**

Franks-Ongoy is replacing Marsha Katz from the Rural Institute at University of Montana. Katz served on the SSAB since 2006 and her six year term recently expired.

The Social Security Advisory Board (SSAB) is an independent, bipartisan board created by Congress to advise the President, the Congress, and the Commissioner of Social Security on matters related to the Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) programs.

By law, the President appoints three members to the SSAB with the advice and consent of the Senate. The President pro tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives appoint two members each. Their appointments must be from different political parties, and they must be made with the advice of the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Finance and House Committee on Ways and Means, respectively.

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