



For Immediate Release
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BAUCUS, GRASSLEY ANNOUNCE DEAL TO ENSURE SENIORS, MILITARY FAMILIES CONTINUE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY DOCTORS

Finance leaders' agreement would ensure doctors can continue seeing Medicare, Tricare patients

Washington, DC – Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) and Ranking Member Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) today reached an agreement to ensure seniors and military families can be confident they will be able to continue seeing their doctors. The Finance leaders' agreement would provide a path to both a short-term and longer-term solution to pay for the Medicare Physician Payment Formula. The agreement would ensure Medicare and Tricare, the health care program for active-duty active duty service members, National Guard and Reserve members, retirees and their families, will continue to pay physicians who participate in those programs at current levels, avoiding a statutory cut in those payments that would otherwise go into effect on December 1.

“Working together, we have set a path to ensure seniors and military families can continue to get quality health care,” said Baucus and Grassley. **“This agreement makes certain that seniors and military families can be confident they will be able to see a doctor and get the medicines they need. It is our hope the Senate will pass this package as soon as possible to give doctors, seniors and military families the care and the certainty they deserve.”**

The two-part agreement the leaders reached today would first provide a month-long extension of the payment formula. This extension would be paid for using the Medicare savings from a new Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) policy that reduces payments for multiple therapy services provided to patients in one day. However, this proposal would also provide relief to therapists by shrinking that reduction from 25 percent to 20 percent. The legislation, The Physician Payment and Therapy Relief Act of 2010, would save \$1 billion, which would then be used to pay for the Medicare payment formula.

Baucus and Grassley also agreed they would together pursue a year-long fix to the formula that could be enacted before the month-long patch expires. The Finance leaders said today that they are working together to secure a mutually agreeable way to pay for the year-long cost of the physician formula as well as other extenders, and they felt confident they would find such a solution.

The Finance Committee has jurisdiction over the Medicare program and the physician payment formula, which is tied to payment levels for the Tricare program. Baucus and Grassley said they hope to pass the package by unanimous consent as soon as today.

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