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Statement of Senator Grassley
News Conference After Floor Consideration of Drug Bills
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Good afternoon. The good news is that today, 97 senators voted for a Medicare prescription drug benefit. We had a debate over what some people consider two competing drug bills. There's no competition in my mind. The tripartisan bill is better. It's permanent, dependable, cost-efficient, sustainable, and gives the most access to prescription drugs, name brand and all.

I keep hearing the Graham plan offers more generous benefits than the tripartisan bill. Well, there's nothing generous about a plan that denies coverage of most brand name drugs. There's nothing generous about a plan that evaporates in eight years. Seniors won't sunset in 2010. Why should a drug benefit? The question from my perspective as a farmer is, which would you rather have, a bushel of corn now, or a corn field that'll feed you indefinitely?

False hope of a good drug benefit is worse than no benefit. The Graham bill offers false hope. The tripartisan bill offers a good drug benefit.

I also keep hearing the tripartisan bill described as the Senate Republican bill. Senator Breaux is standing here. He's not a Republican. Senator Jeffords is here. He's most definitely not a Republican. So I'd like to re-frame the debate. It's not Republicans versus Democrats. It's those who want a good benefit versus those who want a campaign issue.

The next several days will test the mettle of these groups. We'll see who really wants a good prescription drug benefit and who wants a campaign issue. I'm willing to sit down with those who oppose the tripartisan bill and listen to any ideas on how to improve it. I'm not willing to gut the tripartisan bill in favor of another approach that simply won't work. I want to deliver a drug benefit. I refuse to deliver false hope.