



For Immediate Release  
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**Floor Statement of Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.)  
Regarding Health Care Reform**

On February 24, President Obama said, “[N]early a century after Teddy Roosevelt first called for reform, the cost of our health care has weighed down our economy and the conscience of our nation long enough. So let there be no doubt: Health care reform cannot wait, it must not wait, and it will not wait another year.”

I could not agree more with our President. Our next big objective is health care reform.

Comprehensive health reform is no longer simply an option. It’s an imperative.

If we delay, the problems that we face today will grow even worse.

If we delay, millions more Americans will lose their coverage. If we delay, premiums will rise even further out of reach. And if we delay, Federal health care spending will soak up an even greater share of our nation’s income.

In the Finance Committee, we have now held 11 hearings, preparing for health care reform. We held our latest hearing yesterday. The Director of the Office of Management and Budget, Dr. Peter Orszag, testified to the Finance Committee about the President’s health care budget.

Yesterday, Director Orszag told the Committee the cost of not enacting health care reform.

Director Orszag said: “the cost of doing nothing is a fiscal trajectory that will lead to a fiscal crisis over time.”

Director Orszag said that if we do not act, then we will further perpetuate a system in which workers’ take-home pay is unnecessarily reduced by health care costs.

Director Orszag said that if we do not act, then 46 million uninsured Americans will continue to be denied adequate health care. And, according to the Center for American Progress, the ranks of the uninsured grow by 14,000 people every day.

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And Director Orszag said that if we do not act, then a growing burden will be placed on state governments, with unanticipated consequences. For example, health care costs would continue to crowd out state support of higher education. And that would have dire consequences for the education of our nation's young people.

We must move forward.

Senator Grassley and I have laid out a schedule to do just that. Our schedule calls for the Finance Committee to mark up a comprehensive health care reform bill in June. We should put a health care bill on the President's desk this year.

The President's budget makes a historic down payment on health care reform. Over the next ten years, the President's budget invests \$634 billion to reform our health care system.

Reforming health care means making coverage affordable over the long run. It means improving the quality of the care. And it means expanding health insurance to cover all Americans.

We need fundamental reform in cost, quality, and coverage. We need to address all three objectives at the same time. They are interconnected. If you do not address them together, you will never really address any of them alone.

Costs grow too rapidly, because the system pays for volume, not quality. Quality indicators like lifespan and infant mortality remain low, because too many are left out of the system. Families don't get coverage, because health costs grow faster than wages. And without coverage, health insurance costs increase, because providers shift the cost of uncompensated care to their paying customers.

It's a vicious cycle. Each problem feeds on the others.

We need a comprehensive response.

Let us, at long last, deliver on the dream of reform that Teddy Roosevelt called for, nearly a century ago. Let us, at long last, lift the burden of health care costs on our economy and on the conscience of our nation. And let us, at long last, enact health care reform this year.

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