



For Immediate Release
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**BAUCUS HAILS FIRST STEP
IN CLOSING MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG COVERAGE GAP**
Finance Chair Worked to Pass \$250 Medicare Part D Rebate Checks
CMS Will Begin Distributing to Seniors This Week

Washington, DC - Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) today applauded plans to begin distributing \$250 rebate checks this Thursday, June 10, to seniors who reach the coverage gap, also known as the donut hole, in the Medicare Part D prescription drug program this year. Chairman Baucus was a leader in creating these rebate checks for seniors as part of the groundbreaking health care reform law, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, passed this year. That law will close the Medicare drug coverage gap by 2020.

"We have a responsibility to see that parents and grandparents are now cared for as well as they cared for us, which is why we worked hard to pass health care reform to strengthen Medicare and give America's seniors affordable access to the medications and care they need," Baucus said. **"This week, Medicare will automatically begin providing seniors with checks we created in health reform for an additional \$250 to help them purchase their prescriptions in the Medicare coverage gap. Next year, seniors in the coverage gap will also receive a 50 percent discount, making prescriptions much more affordable, until eventually, health reform closes the Medicare coverage gap so all seniors are fully covered for the medicines they need."**

The Affordable Care Act provides for one-time, automatic \$250 rebate checks to all seniors who hit the prescription drug coverage gap in 2010. Beginning in 2011, the health care reform law provides seniors with a 50 percent discount on all brand-name drugs and biologics purchased in the coverage gap. The law is scheduled to fill the gap by 2020.

The coverage gap is a break in prescription drug coverage, found in Medicare Part D insurance plans, where after exceeding a certain cost, seniors are required to pay the full costs of their drugs for a period until reaching the level to qualify for catastrophic coverage. More than eight and a half million seniors reached the donut hole in 2008.

Seniors who reach the coverage gap this year will receive their rebate checks automatically without filling out any paperwork or making a formal request. Checks will be mailed out monthly throughout the year as seniors reach the gap. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has warned seniors to be wary of scams and not provide personal information, such as Medicare, Social Security or bank account numbers, to anyone claiming the information is necessary to receive the rebate check. Seniors should report anything suspicious by calling CMS at 1-800-MEDICARE and can find more information from CMS in the Medicare brochure available here:
<http://www.medicare.gov/Publications/Pubs/pdf/11464.pdf>.

As Chairman of the Finance Committee, Baucus was a leader in Senate efforts to pass the Affordable Care Act and close the coverage gap, so seniors are no longer left with the bill for the costly medications they need. More information on how the Affordable Care Act strengthens Medicare for seniors is available here: <http://finance.senate.gov/newsroom/chairman/release/?id=8fa618b6-c2f3-4618-89d7-219405d05a0f>.

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