

United States Senate

For Immediate Release
February 5, 2009

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BAUCUS, KENNEDY AFFIRM COMMITMENT TO HEALTH REFORM THIS YEAR

Finance, HELP Chairmen write letter to President, express eagerness to move forward

Washington, DC – Senate Finance Committee Chairman Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.) and Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee Chairman Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) today confirmed their mutual intention to move forward on major health care reform in the 111th Congress. In a letter to President Barack Obama, Baucus and Kennedy reiterated their commitment to moving health reform legislation in the Senate this year, and expressed confidence that the President would soon nominate a strong candidate to lead the Department of Health and Human Services and to partner with Congress in the effort. Baucus and Kennedy have been working together on plans to reform the health care system. The text of the Senators' letter follows here:

February 5, 2009

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Sir:

We were saddened to hear about Senator Daschle's decision to withdraw from the nomination process. While we continue to believe that Senator Daschle is highly qualified to hold the position of Secretary of Health and Human Services, we respect his decision and wish him all the best in his future endeavors.

We are writing to affirm our continuing commitment to enacting comprehensive health care reform this year, and to express our confidence that you will swiftly choose an exceptionally qualified and dedicated alternate nominee for Secretary of Health and Human Services to assist in our efforts. As you have emphasized, we must act now. The ranks of the uninsured grow larger each day. The cost of health care to families, businesses and government are crippling and, although we spend more on health care than any other country, the quality of care provided by America's health care system is often uneven compared to other industrialized nations.

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We have a moral duty to ensure that every American can get quality health care. We must act to contain the growth of health care costs to ensure our economic stability; to help American businesses deal with the health care challenge; and to make sure that we are getting our money's worth. Incremental efforts will no longer suffice and we cannot afford to wait any longer. With your continued leadership and commitment, we remain certain that our goal of enacting comprehensive health care reform can be accomplished this year.

Respectfully yours,

Senator Max Baucus
Chairman
Senate Finance Committee

Senator Edward M. Kennedy
Chairman
Senate HELP Committee

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