



For Immediate Release
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Floor Statement of Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.)
Regarding Health Care Reform
As prepared for delivery

Mr. President, it has been nearly five weeks since the Majority Leader moved to proceed to the health care reform bill before us today.

And it has been more than two months since the Finance Committee reported its bill, a great deal of which is reflected in the bill before us today.

It has been three months since the Finance Committee publicly posted the 564 amendments that Senators filed for consideration in the Committee.

It has been seven months since the Finance Committee convened three bipartisan roundtable discussions on each of the three major areas of reform: delivery system reform, insurance coverage, and options for financing reform.

It has been seven months since the Finance Committee issued three bipartisan policy papers detailing the options from which the Committee chose to craft its bill.

It has been 18 months since the Finance Committee convened a bipartisan, day-long health care summit at the Library of Congress.

It has been 19 months since the Finance Committee began holding open hearings to prepare for the bill before us today.

Mr. President, it has been more than 15 long years since the last time that the Senate took on this fight to enact comprehensive health care reform.

It has been 38 years since our late Colleague, Ted Kennedy, proposed a plan to extend health insurance coverage to all.

It has been 44 years since Congress created Medicare, providing health care for America's seniors, and Medicaid, providing health care for the poorest among us.

It has been 64 years since President Harry Truman asked the Congress to enact a national insurance program "to assure the right to adequate medical care and protection from the economic fears of sickness."

It has been 97 years since President Theodore Roosevelt ran on a platform that called for “the protection of home life against the hazards of sickness . . . through the adoption of a system of social insurance adapted to American use.”

And, Mr. President, it is now only hours until this Senate will pass meaningful health care reform.

It will not be long now, Mr. President, until the law will prohibit insurance companies from cancelling insurance policies when people get sick.

It will not be long now until people with pre-existing conditions will have access to health care.

It will not be long now until the law will prohibit insurance companies from imposing lifetime or annual limits on benefits.

It will not be long now until parents will be able to include their children up to age 26 on their insurance policies.

It will not be long now until the law will require insurance companies to report on the share of premium dollars that goes to pay medical care, and the share that doesn't.

It will not be long now until consumers will be able to shop for quality insurance in new Internet websites, where insurance companies will compete for their business.

It will not be too long now until millions of uninsured Americans will be able to buy insurance on new exchanges with tax credits to help make it affordable.

It will not be too long now until the law will prohibit insurance companies from discriminating against women in setting premiums.

It will not be too long now until the law will limit insurance companies in how much more they can charge when people get older.

It will not be too long now until more than 30 million Americans who otherwise would not have health care coverage will finally get that peace of mind.

It will not be too long now until more than 30 million Americans will have a better chance to live longer, healthier, less pain-ridden lives.

It will not be too long now until more than 30 million Americans will be able to share their family Christmas, free of the fears of medical bankruptcy.

It will not be long now, Mr. President.

Mr. President, it has been a long time coming.

I thank God that I have lived to see this day. I thank God for sustaining us and for enabling us to reach this time. Let us now, at long last, pass this historic legislation.

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