



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

Mr. President, it has been more than a month since the Majority Leader moved to proceed to the health care reform bill before us today. At long last, the Senate is now in the final throws of passing this historic legislation.

From the beginning, this Senator has sought out what Abraham Lincoln called "the better angels of our nature." That's the way that this Senator has always sought to legislate.

A year and a half ago, I convened a bipartisan retreat at the Library of Congress. Half a year ago, I convened three bipartisan roundtables with health care experts. Half a year ago, the Finance Committee conducted three bipartisan walk-throughs of the major concepts behind the bill before us today.

We went the extra mile. I reached out to my good friend, the Ranking Republican Member of the Finance Committee. I reached out to the Ranking Republican Member of the Health Committee.

We sought to craft a bill that would appeal to the broad middle. We sought to craft a bill that could win the support of Republicans and Democrats alike.

We met, a group of six of us, three Democrats and three Republicans. We met more than 30 times. We met for months.

No, we did not reach a formal agreement. The Leadership on the other side of the aisle went to great lengths to stop us from doing so.

But even though we did not reach a formal agreement, we came very close to doing so. The principles that we discussed are very much the principles upon which the Finance Committee built its bill. The principles that we discussed are very much the principles reflected in the bill before us today.

From the debate that the Senate has conducted this past month, you would not know it. During this debate, some on the other side of the aisle have mischaracterized the bill before us. Some on the other side of the aisle have set about a systematic campaign to demonize this bill.

Through bare assertion alone, with the thinnest connection to fact, they have sought to vilify our work. If one listened to their assertions alone, one would not recognize the bill before us.

And so, let me, quite simply, state the facts.

Some on the other side of the aisle assert that this bill is a Government takeover of health care.

The fact is that the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office says that this bill would reduce the Government's fiscal role in health care. Just 3 days ago, CBO wrote, and I quote:

"CBO expects that the proposal would generate a reduction in the federal budgetary commitment to health care during the decade following the 10-year budget window."

Some on the other side of the aisle assert that this bill would add to our Nation's burden of debt.

The fact is that the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office says that this bill would reduce the deficit by \$132 billion in the first 10 years and by between \$650 billion and \$1.3 trillion in the second 10 years. The fact is that this is the most serious deficit reduction effort in more than a decade.

Some on the other side of the aisle assert that this bill would harm Medicare.

The fact is that Medicare's independent Actuary says that this bill would extend the life of Medicare by 9 years. The fact is that this is the most responsible effort to shore up Medicare in more than a decade.

Some on the other side of the aisle assert that this bill does not do enough to ensure the uninsured.

The fact is that the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office says that this bill would extend access to health care to 31 million Americans who otherwise would have to go without. The fact is that CBO says, and I quote:

"the share of legal nonelderly residents with insurance coverage would rise from about 83 percent currently to about 94 percent."

Nothing that Senators on the other side of the aisle have proposed would come close. CBO estimated that the Republican substitute offered in the House of Representatives would have extended coverage to just 3 million people. The fact is that CBO says of that plan, and I quote:

“The share of legal nonelderly residents with insurance coverage in 2019 would be about 83 percent, roughly in line with the current share.”

I would cite the facts about the Republican substitute in the Senate. But the fact is that there is no Republican substitute.

Some on the other side of the aisle assert that they simply prefer a more modest reform of health care.

The fact is that the Republicans controlled the Senate from 1995 to 2001 and from 2003 to 2006. The fact is that before they took control, in 1994, 36 million Americans, 15.8 percent of non-elderly Americans were without health insurance coverage. In the last year of their control, in 2006, nearly 47 million Americans, 17.8 percent of non-elderly Americans were without health insurance coverage. The legacy of Republican control was 10 million more Americans uninsured.

Some on the other side of the aisle say that we are moving too fast.

The fact is that it was 1912 when former President Theodore Roosevelt first made national health insurance part of the Progressive Party’s campaign platform. The fact is that people of good will have been working at this for nearly a century.

The fact is, health care reform for America is now within reach. The fact is, the most serious effort to control health care costs is now within reach. The fact is, life-saving health care coverage for 31 million Americans is now within reach.

Let us, at long last, grasp that result. Let us, this time, not let this good thing slip through our hands. And let us, at long last, enact health care reform for all.

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