



For Immediate Release
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**Opening Statement of Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.)
at Today's Mark-Up of the America's Healthy Future Act**

Benjamin Franklin said:

"Well done is better than well said."

Now pretty much everything's been said. Now it's time to get the job done.

The costs of inaction are clear. Americans simply cannot afford the status quo.

Americans are looking for common-sense solutions. Americans want a balanced plan that takes the best ideas from both sides. And Americans want us to craft a package that will get the 60 votes that it needs to pass.

For 2 years now, that's exactly what we have been doing, in this Committee.

Over the last two years, we held 20 hearings on health care. Last June, we held a health care summit at the Library of Congress.

We held three roundtable discussions with experts on each of the three major areas of reform: health care delivery, coverage, and how to pay for it. In connection with each roundtable, we put out detailed option papers. And then we held three walk-throughs to hash out those options.

Six Members of the Committee — three Republicans and three Democrats — held 31 meetings to try to come to a consensus. We held exhaustive meetings. We met for more than 61 hours. We went the extra mile.

And now, we've held an open and exhaustive markup. I put out the mark and posted it on the Web on September 16. That was nearly a week before we started the markup.

In a first for this Committee, we posted every amendment — all 564 of them — on the Web.

Today's session to report our bill is our eighth day of meeting. Many of those days were long days. It's been more than 22 years since the Finance Committee met for eight days on a single bill.

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Senators offered and the Committee considered 135 amendments. We conducted 79 roll-call votes. And we adopted 41 amendments.

Now, the scores are in. And I am proud to say that our bill passes the test.

Ours is a balanced package. It starts reducing the deficit within 10 years. By the end of the 10-year window, it's moving in the right direction. It reduces the deficit by \$81 billion over 10 years.

And our package would control health care spending in the long run. CBO said that in the second 10 years, our bill would continue to reduce the deficit by a quarter to a half a percent of GDP. That's anywhere from \$450 to nearly \$900 billion in deficit reduction.

All Americans should have access to affordable, quality health care coverage. Our bill would raise the share of Americans with insurance coverage from about 83 percent to 94 percent.

Our bill would deliver coverage to 23 million Americans through new insurance exchanges, and to 14 million more new enrollees through Medicaid.

Our bill would dramatically increase prevention and wellness. It would begin shifting health care delivery to the quality of care provided, not the quantity of services rendered. It would lower prescription drug costs dramatically for seniors.

Folks who are satisfied with their current health insurance coverage could keep it. People would not be required to change health plans.

Our bill would reform the insurance market. No individual could be denied insurance coverage or charged more because of a pre-existing health condition.

Our bill would prohibit insurance companies from discriminating on the basis of gender or health status. Insurance companies could no longer charge women more, or charge more if someone's been sick.

Our bill would require insurance companies to renew policies as long as policyholders paid their premiums. No longer would insurance companies be able to drop coverage when people get sick.

In our plan as amended, Members of Congress would be required to buy their health insurance through the same exchanges that people in their own states would use.

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Ours is a balanced plan that can pass the Senate. Our bill should win the support of Republicans and Democrats alike. Now the choice is up to Senators on this Committee.

My Colleagues, this is our opportunity to make history. Our actions here will determine whether we extend better health care to more Americans.

Ben Franklin said that “well done is better than well said.” Senators, now is the time that will tell whether things are merely said, or whether something is actually done. Now is the time to get this done.

Let us enact this balanced, common-sense plan to improve health care. Let us reform the health care system to control costs and premiums. And let us extend health care coverage to all Americans.

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