



Committee On Finance

Max Baucus, Ranking Member

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Bipartisan Welfare Reform Moves Closer to Law

Baucus Praises Committee for Working Together to Reach Agreement on Child Care, Education and Training

(Washington, DC) – After three years and nine extensions of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families or the TANF program, the Senate Finance Committee approved several critical improvements to preserve the safety net available for low-income families with unprecedented, bipartisan support.

Senator Max Baucus (D-MT), the top Democrat on the Committee, has fought for child care, access to education and training, and child support reforms since the bill first came up for reauthorization in 2002. These provisions provide support to families that have not been able to move from welfare to work because limited access to quality child care, education and training.

“I am very grateful to my colleagues on the Finance Committee for working so hard on this bill and getting it done,” said Baucus. “Because of our cooperation today, parents on welfare are one step closer to getting the child care and educational help they need to join the workforce.”

The Committee’s bill would make several critical changes to the nation’s welfare law. Funding for the child care program is increased \$6 billion to better support families on welfare and those moving from welfare to work. Rehabilitation services would be available for those toughest to place in permanent jobs. The legislation will also provide transitional health care for those leaving welfare to work. States would be given additional flexibility to support two- and four-year higher education programs for a portion of their caseload. The bill provides authority, funding and support for American Indian tribes to operate tribal welfare programs. And, reforms to child support will ensure more families on welfare receive child support payments, an important poverty reduction measure.

With strong support from Baucus and Committee Chairman Charles Grassley (R-IA), the bill is thought to have enough momentum to pass the Senate later this spring.

“Given the bipartisan nature of what we have been able to create here in the Senate, I hope that this bill provides a roadmap for the House of Representatives and eventually conference in both tone and substance,” said Baucus. “The faster this bill gets done and sent to President Bush, the faster we’ll be able to get thousands more Americans into decent, better paying jobs.”

Since the passage of the 1996 welfare reform law, over 2 million families and over 7 million individuals have left the welfare rolls. About 60 percent of those leaving TANF have transitioned to employment.

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