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BAUCUS CONDEMNS SENATE FAILURE ON MEDICARE DRUG PRICE NEGOTIATION

*Finance panel approved plan last week to allow negotiation,
increase drug pricing transparency*

Washington, DC – Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) today strongly condemned the Senate’s failure to act on his plan to let the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) negotiate for lower drug prices in the Medicare prescription drug benefit. Baucus made this statement after today’s 55-42 vote against considering the legislation. Last week, the Senate Finance Committee approved Baucus’s Chairman’s Mark amending S. 3, the Medicare Prescription Drug Price Negotiation Act of 2007 by a vote of 13 to eight.

“This vote gives the short end of the stick to America’s seniors,” said Baucus. **“It’s beyond me why the Senate would not choose to stand up for seniors. Concerns about a bill from the House should not frighten Senators into silence on an issue this important. The Senate ought to debate this legislation, take a position, and actually work to make smart changes to improve the Medicare drug benefit.”**

Baucus’s plan strikes language in the 2003 Medicare Modernization Act that prohibits the HHS Secretary from participating in price negotiations for the drug benefit. The proposal also provides for greater transparency in drug pricing for the Medicare benefit, and seeks to give doctors and patients information that will allow them to compare the effectiveness of drugs and other medical treatments.

The Baucus amendment is revenue-neutral. A summary of the plan approved by the Finance Committee can be viewed on the legislation page of the Committee’s website.

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