



For Immediate Release
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**FINANCE PANEL TO ACT ON INDIAN HEALTH LEGISLATION
ON WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12**

*10:00 a.m. business meeting will address long-overdue updates to Indian health policies
in Medicare, Medicaid, and the Children's Health Insurance Program*

Washington, DC – Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) announced today that the panel will consider and vote on improvements to Indian health care services this **Wednesday, September 12, at 10:00 a.m. in Dirksen Senate Office Building Room 215**. The Chairman's Mark of the "Medicare, Medicaid, and CHIP Indian Health Care Improvement Act of 2007" provides long-overdue updates to Indian health policies in programs under the Finance Committee's jurisdiction, namely Medicare, Medicaid, and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Medicare, Medicaid, and CHIP provide a significant amount of health care to Indian people through the Indian Health Service. But insufficient funding, reimbursement problems, and outdated rules keep many Indians from getting the health care they need.

"Action to ensure quality, affordable, and accessible health care to America's Tribal communities is long overdue," said Baucus. **"Right now, the Indian Health Service and Tribal health care sites get less than sixty percent of the funds it actually takes to care for their patients. The Medicare, Medicaid, and CHIP provisions we're putting into the Indian health care bill will help Indian health providers get better reimbursement, connect more Native Americans with the health care services they need, and give Indian communities a greater voice in the Federal government's handling of their health care."**

The full Indian Health Care Improvement Act (IHCA, S. 1200) was approved by the Senate Indian Affairs Committee on May 10, 2007, and is expected to incorporate Finance-approved provisions prior to its consideration by the full Senate. The Finance Mark includes provisions to:

- clarify how Medicaid, Medicare, and CHIP pay Indian health providers,
- increase outreach and enrollment of Indians in Medicaid and CHIP,
- clarify protections to keep Indians in Medicaid from being charged co-payments, deductibles, and fees improperly, and to keep Indian health providers from being reimbursed at lower rates due to fees charged by a contract health service
- protect Indian health providers from discrimination in payment for services,
- require States and the Secretary of Health and Human Services to consult with Indian health providers on the administration of programs that affect Tribal communities,
- allow certain Indian health providers more flexibility to provide transportation and other services to ensure the treatment of Indian patients in need,
- ensure Indian health providers are paid appropriately by Medicaid managed care organizations, and
- require the Secretary to report on Indian enrollment in federal programs and related matters on an annual basis.

Baucus also worked to improve Indian health care services in the Senate-approved Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2007, specifically targeting Native communities for outreach and enrollment of uninsured children.

Language of the Chairman's Mark will be available today on the Finance Committee website at <http://finance.senate.gov/sitepages/legislation.htm>.