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BAUCUS COMMENTS ON CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM RENEWAL

*Finance Chairman says CHIP can and should cover more low-income, uninsured
American children in the future*

Washington, DC – Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) commented tonight upon Senate approval of legislation that will extend the Children's Health Insurance Program through March 31, 2009, ensuring funds that will allow states to maintain their current enrollment through that date. Baucus, along with Finance Committee leaders Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), Jay Rockefeller (D-W.Va.), and Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), wrote the original Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act, as well as legislation to provide health coverage to as many 10 million low-income, uninsured American children through renewal of the expiring program this year. That bill, and a similar bill that was modified by the Finance Committee leaders to address specific White House concerns, have both been vetoed by the President. The CHIP extension and funding included in today's Medicare bill will keep the vetoes from causing more than six million children currently in the program to lose their health coverage.

“The CHIP extension Congress will pass this week is important, and the right thing to do, in that it will maintain health coverage for more than six million children who currently get their health care through CHIP. Thanks to this extension, moms and dads of CHIP kids can get help when a son has an ear infection, or a daughter needs a new inhaler.

“While I am glad to be able to continue health coverage for millions of children in CHIP today, this status-quo extension of the Children's Health Insurance Program is not what I wanted for America's working families. CHIP works to get low-income, uninsured American children the doctors' visits and medicines they need to stay healthy. Congress and the President had numerous opportunities this year to do right by millions more low-income, uninsured American children who desperately need the health care and coverage CHIP can provide. But it is clear that the President's vetoes of CHIP legislation will force four million kids in need to continue to live without health care - for now.

“I will never stop working to bring peace of mind to parents and kids in America's working families by renewing and improving the Children's Health Insurance Program.”

It is now necessary for the House to approve the Medicare legislation including the CHIP extension, so that it may be sent to the White House for signature into law.