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## SENATE APPROVES SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING BILL WITH BAUCUS PRIORITIES ON UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE, MEDICAID RULES

*Modified versions of Finance Committee provisions in final funding legislation*

*Washington, DC* – Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) today won final Senate passage of a 2008 supplemental funding bill including key measures that reflect Finance panel priorities. The legislation, which now goes to the White House for signature into law, will extend unemployment insurance (UI) for America’s workers and will safeguard Medicaid services for millions of low-income Americans. The Senate Finance Committee introduced similar UI provisions in late January as part of the economic stimulus package, and Baucus has been vocal in his opposition to strict Medicaid regulations issued by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to reduce federal funding to the Medicaid program.

**“This supplemental funding bill retains a number of vital priorities set forth by the Finance Committee,”** said Baucus. **“This bill recognizes that more and more Americans are running out of the benefits they need to make ends meet while they look for jobs, and provides much of the extended unemployment benefits that I have been calling for all year. In the same way, this bill takes major steps to protect low-income Medicaid beneficiaries from steep and unwise funding cuts. Congress can do more for those without jobs and those without health care, and I’ll keep fighting for those folks in the coming months.”**

The UI provision would make 13 weeks of additional UI benefits available to jobless Americans through the end of March 2009, as the Finance Committee first approved in January of this year. Unfortunately, a Senate provision providing Americans in high unemployment states – with total unemployment rates of six percent or higher – with 13 additional weeks of eligibility for a total of 26 additional weeks was not included.

The bill also suspends until April 1, 2009, six of seven proposed Medicaid regulations that Baucus has said would cut millions of vulnerable Americans out of the health care system and shift millions of dollars in health care costs to state and local governments at a time when they are already under tremendous financial pressure. Specifically, the proposed rules would force cuts in school-based, rehabilitation, and case management services, and limit the ability of states to impose taxes on health care providers. They would also change the definition of public provider, the policy on intergovernmental transfers, and eliminate payment for graduate medical education. Baucus expressed disappointment that a seventh regulation effectively cutting Medicaid coverage for outpatient health services was not blocked, nor was an Administration directive that would impose severe requirements on states covering children with family income levels of 250 percent of poverty under the Children’s Health Insurance Program. The Senate included a moratorium on the directive in its supplemental funding bill.

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