



Committee On Finance

Max Baucus, Ranking Member

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Statement on Introduction of Elder Justice Act

Last June, as Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, I was pleased to call a hearing on Elder Justice. At that hearing, the Committee heard about the terrible gaps in our nation's response to elder abuse and neglect. We learned that elder abuse and neglect occurs in nursing homes and private homes, in crowded facilities and in isolated rural communities. It is committed by family members and by professional caregivers, by those who are overwhelmed but well meaning, and by those who have malicious intent. When elder abuse is identified – and we know that the vast majority of cases are never reported – it may be detected by loved ones, by doctors, by social workers, or by police.

But rarely is there a coordinated response. Doctors may not want to interfere with precarious living arrangements. Police may not know how to handle a confused and disoriented victim. And nursing home staff is not trained to tell the difference between a bruise caused by a fall and a bruise caused by a beating.

We also learned that our efforts to improve the prevention, identification, and intervention in elder mistreatment are in their infancy. That's why I am so pleased to be a cosponsor of the Elder Justice Act. I applaud your advocacy, Senator Breaux, and your efforts to keep this issue at the forefront. The Elder Justice Act takes important steps to improve our knowledge of elder mistreatment. And it provides federal leadership for efforts to eliminate it. The bill offers incentives for improvements – like employer tax credits for long term care workers and grants for multidisciplinary training – as well as tough enforcement when abuse is institutionalized.

I look forward to supporting this bill in the Finance Committee and taking critical steps to promote justice for all older and vulnerable Americans.