



Committee On Finance

Max Baucus, Ranking Member

NEWS RELEASE

<http://finance.senate.gov>

For Immediate Release
Thursday, May 26, 2005

Contact: Liz Fowler (Baucus)
202-224-4515
Jodi Seth (Dingell)
202-225-6353

Statement of Senator Max Baucus and Representative John D. Dingell On the Administration's Announcement of a Medicaid Commission

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) Today, Senator Max Baucus, Ranking Member of the Senate Finance Committee, and Representative John D. Dingell, Ranking Member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee issued the following statement regarding the recent announcement of a Medicaid Commission established by the Secretary of Health and Human Services, Michael O. Leavitt. The statement follows:

“Medicaid plays a vital role in the lives of millions of beneficiaries. And most agree that the gravity of the challenges faced by the program call for thoughtful, creative and levelheaded solutions. The proposed Smith-Bingaman Commission set forth an impartial, unbiased process to develop policy recommendations aimed at sustaining and improving the program for the future. And as such, this commission focused on long-term reforms rather than policy driven by arbitrary budget numbers.

“Unfortunately, the Medicaid Commission proposed by the administration falls short of the unbiased, independent advisory panel proposed by Senators Smith and Bingaman. It also fails to meet any of the criteria laid out in a letter we sent to Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Michael Leavitt, other than what is already required by law. Instead, voting members of the administration's commission will be appointed solely by Secretary Leavitt. Although Members of Congress are given the opportunity to nominate eight members to participate in the commission's proceedings, those members will serve as non-voting members. And regrettably, the primary initial charge of the administration's commission is to engage in a budget-driven, rather than policy-driven, exercise to produce \$10 billion in 'scorable' Medicaid cuts.

“Given the Leavitt Medicaid Commission's lack of independence and artificially short deadline, it is difficult to see how this commission would make a significant contribution to the debate on Medicaid. Rather, its role and contribution would likely be to reiterate the administration's current position on Medicaid reform and spending cuts, which we do not believe represents a consensus view.

“After careful consideration, we have decided not to exercise the opportunity to appoint a Member of Congress to participate as a non-voting member of the Leavitt Commission. Rather, we look forward to working with our colleagues to craft credible, responsible Medicaid policy through upcoming hearings and deliberations in the Senate Committee on Finance, the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in Congress.”

#