



**For Immediate Release**  
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**Contact: Kristen Hawn (202) 226-9782**

## **Blue Dog Statement on Draft Health Care Reform Legislation**

Washington, DC - Today, Representative Mike Ross (D-AR), Chairman of the Blue Dog Health Care Task Force, issued the following statement after the release of draft health care reform legislation in the House.

“This is only a draft. There are parts of the more than 800 page bill that we will support, and others that we will want to improve upon. There will be plenty of opportunities to accomplish this as the legislation makes its way through the three House committees.

“Health care reform is critical to the future prosperity of our country, and the competitiveness of American business, and we will continue to be constructive partners in the health care reform effort. Congress faces many challenges in passing comprehensive reform, but the effort is worth it because of the importance of the issue for the millions of Americans we represent. The committees’ draft includes some important reforms to increase quality and improve access. There is, however, a lot of work that needs to be done before a final product is brought to the House floor.

“In order to ensure American families will keep the health insurance they currently have, it is essential that the public option be required to compete on a level playing field in which doctors and hospitals are adequately reimbursed and not forced to participate. The committees’ draft makes some progress in this regard by not requiring provider participation. However, we remain concerned about the use of Medicare rates.

“We also believe that health care reform must be done in a fiscally-responsible and deficit-neutral manner. The committees’ draft falls short in reducing costs and increasing efficiency, outlining only a fraction of what will be required to achieve a product that does not add to the deficit. We have to take steps to control the cost of health care if we ever hope to put this country back on a fiscally sustainable path.

“One idea that we have put forth is to make the availability of a public option contingent on the health insurance industry’s ability to contain cost and adopt needed reforms. This approach will hold the health industry accountable for its commitment to the President to find \$2 trillion in cost savings and to make needed reforms. If we do not build in a mechanism to obtain these savings, we are deeply concerned that an opportunity to control rising health care costs will be lost.

*-- Continued --*

“The Blue Dogs look forward to continuing work with our colleagues to produce a bill that drives down cost and makes health insurance more affordable – one that we can ultimately send to the President’s desk with overwhelming support. The American people deserve more affordable, higher quality health care, and we look forward to working together in the days and weeks ahead to achieve this goal.”

*The fiscally conservative Democratic Blue Dog Coalition was formed in 1995 with the goal of representing the center of the House of Representatives and appealing to the mainstream values of the American public. The Blue Dogs are dedicated to a core set of beliefs that transcend partisan politics, including a deep commitment to the financial stability and national security of the United States. Currently there are 52 members of the Blue Dog Coalition. For more information, visit the Blue Dog Website at <http://www.house.gov/melancon/BlueDogs/>.*

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