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Press conference to announce Bipartisan Patient Bill of Rights

Max S. Baucus

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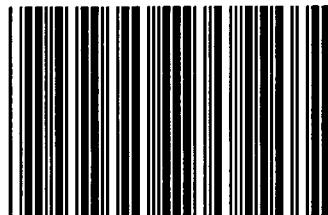
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BAUCUS

Statement of Senator Max Baucus
Press Conference to Announce
The Bipartisan Patient Bill of Rights
July 29, 1998

Thank you very much.

This Centrist bill is an attempt to take the politics out of an issue that should be bipartisan. I don't know of one Republican who is cosponsoring the Daschle-Kennedy bill. Show me one Democrat that is working with Senator Nickles on his legislation.

Yet, the two parties are unified in their desire to make sure that patients and doctors, not the insurance company, decide what is medically necessary.

Even in my state of Montana, where managed care penetration is still low, I get letters almost every day from people who are upset because of a medical decision that was not made in the best interest of the patient, but in the best interest of the bottom line.

Each year, hundreds of thousands of people come to D.C. to see their Senators and Congressman. Many don't realize that by coming here, they are putting themselves at risk.

What if an emergency comes up and they have to go the ER? Will the HMO pay? Will the HMO force them to go back home? What if complications arise on the flight back home?

This is what happened to an Illinois woman who was on vacation in Hawaii. Despite the advice of a Hawaii physician, and the HMO's own doctor, the HMO forced Barbara Garvey to fly back to Chicago in an unstable condition for a bone marrow transplant. Mrs. Garvey had a stroke along the way, and passed away nine days later.

The “Promoting Responsible Managed Care Act” will make sure that patients come first. Our plan applies to all Americans, not just a select few. We make sure that people have access to emergency room coverage, no matter where they are in the country.

We make sure that our patient protections are enforceable, and that HMOs are held accountable. Children will have direct access to their pediatrician. Women will have direct access to their OB-GYN.

Finally, we make sure the American public knows about the quality of the health plan in a way that people can understand, using a report card system.

Most importantly, instead of leaving the Senate in gridlock on yet another issue, this Centrist legislation attempts to protect patients in a way that can gain bipartisan support.

I am proud to be part of this effort, and I urge Senators on both sides of the aisle to take a long, hard look at this legislation. Thank you.