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Opening Statement of Sen. Chuck Grassley
Hearing, "Medicare Governance: Perspectives on
the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services"
Tuesday, June 19, 2001

Today's hearing gives us an opportunity for a progress report on the efforts of Secretary Thompson and his team to strengthen the administration of Medicare and Medicaid. These programs are critically important to our constituents, and we must make them work better.

In my view, right now it is surely too soon to expect major results from the new team. Secretary Thompson, you've been on the job five months, and Administrator Scully has been in place for less than a month. So I assure you that this hearing is by no means a "final exam." As you know well, there is much more to do; I noticed that the reforms you announced on Thursday were described as "First Steps." So you clearly recognize that there are many more steps ahead.

But I do want to make it clear that I have been impressed by your initial efforts, Secretary Thompson, and those of Administrator Scully. The President chose you for these jobs because you are well-known as can-do reformers who would shake up the bureaucracy. You've been a breath of fresh air.

Today, I do want to hear more details on the changes recently announced for the agency now known as the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). I am particularly interested in learning more about your ideas for the Medicare education campaign, because I have long felt that we need to do much more to educate beneficiaries about the often-confusing Medicare program. And now that you've taken these "First Steps," I also want to hear your ideas on what the "Next Steps" might be.

I am also interested in CMS's ability to administer major program improvements that I hope we will enact this year, including a prescription drug benefit. I look forward to working closely with you to continue to improve the efficiency and responsiveness of CMS.