



U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON

Finance

SENATOR CHUCK GRASSLEY, OF IOWA - CHAIRMAN

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Grassley Identifies Ways to Help the Uninsured

WASHINGTON – Sen. Chuck Grassley, chairman of the Committee on Finance, today said he will focus his efforts on helping Americans without health insurance on two areas: promoting flexibility for state governments and bolstering the individual- and employer-based insurance market.

“Millions of Americans lack health insurance, and there are many reasons why,” Grassley said. “While the reasons are diverse, the solutions are guided by two broad principles. One is that state governments need flexibility to serve the uninsured. Another is that we also need to encourage affordable, accessible coverage in the private insurance market.”

Grassley’s comments came after the second of two hearings exploring the profile of the uninsured population and possible solutions. He said it’s critically important to keep in mind that because the uninsured population is so diverse, there is no one-size-fits-all solution.

Instead, Congress must think about changes that are unique to each of the different populations that make up the uninsured, Grassley said.

President Bush has already put forth a series of incremental options that would help millions of uninsured individuals and families gain health coverage, Grassley said. More than 70 percent of uninsured adults are employed but still go without health coverage. The President’s proposal to offer a refundable tax credit would help this working population tremendously.

Grassley said the President’s proposal also encourages states to use flexibility to improve outreach and enrollment efforts to cover millions of adults and children who may already qualify for existing federal health programs but are not enrolled. Options such as streamlining the application process and reducing paperwork burdens on families are common-sense ways to make these programs more accessible, Grassley said.

Grassley said solutions to the uninsured problem must not overburden existing federal programs that already might be stretched to the limit and must not discourage employers from offering health insurance to employees.

“More and more Americans rely on health coverage in the employer-based insurance market, whether as an employee, a retiree or through a spouse. Millions more purchase individual private insurance,” Grassley said. “We have to make sure we continue to promote consumer choice and encourage affordable private sector options. The more options Americans have, the more likely they are to find an insurance plan that meets their needs. We have a strong bipartisan will to tackle the uninsured problem this year, and I’m looking forward to working with our President and my colleagues to accomplish this goal.”

