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## **BAUCUS WILL SEEK BANS ON UNFAIR MEDICARE MARKETING, INSURERS AGREE WITH FINANCE PANEL ON OPTIONS TO CRACK DOWN**

*Washington, DC* – Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) said a meeting between members of the panel and leaders of the nation’s major health insurance companies should result in stronger consumer protections for America’s seniors. Baucus launched an effort in the Committee this year to end unscrupulous marketing practices that snare seniors into unwanted or unneeded private Medicare plans. At today’s meeting in the Finance Committee hearing room, the Association of Health Insurance Plans committed to a number of proposals for legally banning unscrupulous marketing by plan agents on the ground. Baucus said legislative recommendations from AHIP – which include prohibitions on “cold calls” from agents and on financial inducements to pressure seniors – are a “huge step forward,” and that he expects the group to work with the Committee to ban these and several other predatory marketing tactics outright.

**“The Finance Committee just won’t stand for companies preying on America’s seniors, and I think the insurers selling these private Medicare plans get that now. AHIP and the insurers came in with strong proposals to stop abusive tactics like cold calls and financial inducements to bribe seniors into private Medicare plans they don’t want or need. The Finance Committee will want to go further to protect seniors, but we’ve started a good discussion with the purveyors of these plans,”** said Baucus. **“I intend to write these and other protections for seniors into law with my Medicare bill this year. The members of the Finance Committee are clearly committed to working together and will seek to work with insurers, where appropriate, to make sure seniors aren’t victimized by unscrupulous agents.”**

In addition to prohibitions on cold calls, door-to-door marketing, and financial inducements for seniors, AHIP’s proposals included better training of sales agents, stronger oversight at the local level, and other measures. Baucus said today that a number of additional provisions must be enacted to fully protect seniors, including:

- A prohibition on agents suggesting home visits to seniors. Home visits should only be allowed pursuant to seniors’ express requests.
- A prohibition on gifts or meals used to entice seniors to listen to sales presentations.
- Oversight authority to monitor and enforce senior protections at the state level to compensate for a lack of oversight by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

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In the meeting, Baucus also reiterated his concern regarding private Medicare Advantage providers that tie their agents' bonus and compensation to the total number of approved applications, rather than to ensuring that consumers have the appropriate plan and coverage. He expects to bring Medicare legislation forward for consideration this spring.

Information on the Finance Committee's February 7 and February 13 hearings on marketing of private Medicare plans is available online at <http://finance.senate.gov/sitepages/hearings.htm>.

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