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**SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN RESPONDS TO PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS
TO JOINT CONGRESS**

*Baucus praises President Obama's commitment to health care,
calls for quick action on comprehensive reform*

Washington, DC – Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) issued a brief statement tonight on President Barack Obama's first address to a joint session of Congress. Earlier today, Baucus stated that he looks forward to working with the President and colleagues in Congress to move comprehensive health care reform this year, and that overhauling the U.S. health care system is a prerequisite for long-term deficit reduction and economic security.

"President Obama struck a lot of right notes tonight. He tackled the issues that weigh on our country and threaten the livelihoods of millions of American families. His aggressive stance on economic reforms, his focus on energy independence and education, and particularly his insistence on health care reform this year are all reasons that Americans can feel more hopeful tonight.

"As Chairman of the Finance Committee, I've been working closely together with President Obama and with all of my colleagues to make America's economy strong again, and now it's time for all of us to take the next important step. I was pleased to hear the President acknowledge that a comprehensive overhaul of our health care system must be part and parcel of America's economic recovery, and pleased to hear him promise a real investment toward that goal. Left unchecked, growing health care costs will undo any economic stability that we are able to regain in the short term. That's why the President is right to recognize that we must make health care accessible and affordable for every American, and find smart ways to keep costs in check while ensuring the highest quality care. That's why I look forward to the significant commitment to real health care reform that we will see in the President's budget this week.

"The President's clear commitment to health care is one of the reasons I've said that the stars are aligned for health care reform. I will continue to work closely with Senator Kennedy, Senator Grassley, and others to move comprehensive reform legislation forward this year. Working together, we can remake America's health system, rebuild America's economy, and restore Americans' confidence in our country's future."

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