

MEMORANDUM

TO: Reporters and Editors
FR: Jill Kozeny, 202-224-1308
for U.S. Senator Chuck Grassley of Iowa
RE: proposals published in JAMA
DA: April 1, 2009

Senator Chuck Grassley commented on the recommendations published today in the Journal of the American Medical Association about financial support from industry.

Senator Grassley's comment:

“These recommendations carry a lot of weight and represent a desire to build confidence and take away questions raised by financial ties. I’ll continue my effort to bring about full disclosure of money from industry to physicians. Letting the sun shine in creates an atmosphere for greater accountability, and that’s good for everyone in the medical profession and the patients who rely on their care.”

Senator Grassley is the sponsor of legislation, along with Senator Herb Kohl of Wisconsin, that would require makers of pharmaceuticals, medical devices and biologics to publicly report money they give to doctors over \$100 a year. Their Physician Payments Sunshine Act of 2009, S.301, would establish a nationwide standard requiring drug, device and biologic makers to report payments to doctors to the Department of Health and Human Services and for those payments to be posted online in a user friendly way for public consumption. It would establish penalties as high as \$1 million for knowingly failing to report the information. The proposal incorporates many recommendations of the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission, an independent congressional agency which advises Congress on issues affecting the Medicare program. The bill marks a continued effort by Senators Grassley and Kohl to achieve public disclosure of financial relationships between physicians and the drug, device and biologic industry. The pending legislation is along the lines of S.2029, a bill they introduced two years ago, which the 110th Congress never considered.

Senator Grassley has conducted extensive oversight and revealed large sums of unreported money going to leading research doctors. He’s put pressure on the National Institutes of Health to help achieve disclosure by fully exercising its authority to track financial relationships between the drug and device industry and doctors conducting federally sponsored medical research. Senator Grassley said the movement during the last year toward greater tracking of financial relationships by individual drug companies, professional associations and medical centers shows that the reform movement is gaining traction.

Senator Grassley also has examined financial ties that members of advisory boards for the Food and Drug Administration have with the drug industry, and he issued a report two years ago on industry support for continuing medical education.