



For Immediate Release
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Blue Dogs: Health Care Reform Must Protect Consumer Choice, Promote Competition in the Marketplace

Washington, DC - Today, members of the fiscally conservative Democratic Blue Dog Coalition released an official set of conditions for responsible health care reform aimed at protecting consumer choice and promoting competition in the marketplace. The conditions reflect the Blue Dog position that, should a public option be included, it be structured in a manner that not only expands coverage for the uninsured, but ensures families have the ability to keep their current health coverage.

“It is essential we pass a health care bill that would not disrupt the ability of families to keep their health care coverage and see their doctor,” said **Rep. Mike Ross** (D-AR), Chairman of the Blue Dog Health Care Task Force. “We cannot create a public option that stacks the deck – through rate setting and forced participation – against a system that currently provides coverage to 160 million Americans.”

Blue Dog Coalition members cited specific concerns about the viability of a “Medicare-like” public option, rejecting the idea that Medicare payment rates be used as the basis for reimbursement. In keeping with the Blue Dog tenet of fiscal responsibility, members also insisted that any public health care option be financially stable, and that it be employed only in the absence of adequate competition and cost containment.

“Medicare pays too much for medical procedures in some places and too little in others,” said **Rep. Earl Pomeroy** (D-ND), member of the Blue Dog Health Care Task Force. “Simply put, Medicare reimbursement rates are a mess and therefore can’t be a sound foundation for a much broader range of health care reimbursements.”

“The key to successful health care reform is building as broad a coalition of support as possible,” said **Rep. Jim Cooper** (D-TN), Blue Dog Health Care Task Force Vice Chairman. “The conditions we’re laying out today ensure that Americans who like their current health insurance can keep it; that they will have access to their choice of quality, affordable health care plans; and that any public option exist on a level playing field. And of course, we strongly support President Obama’s commitment to keep health care reform deficit-neutral.”

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The Blue Dog Health Care Task Force membership includes: Rep. Mike Ross, *Chairman*, Rep. Marion Berry, *Vice Chairman*, Rep. Parker Griffith, *Vice Chairman*, Rep. Zack Space, *Vice Chairman*, Rep. John Barrow, Rep. Travis Childers, Rep. Jim Cooper, Rep. Jim Matheson, Rep. Mike Michaud, Rep. Collin Peterson, Rep. Earl Pomeroy, Rep. Loretta Sanchez, Rep. John Tanner, Rep. Mike Thompson and Rep. Charlie Wilson.

The fiscally conservative Democratic Blue Dog Coalition was formed in 1995 with the goal of representing the center of the House of Representatives and appealing to the mainstream values of the American public. The Blue Dogs are dedicated to a core set of beliefs that transcend partisan politics, including a deep commitment to the financial stability and national security of the United States. Currently there are 51 members of the Blue Dog Coalition. For more information, visit the Blue Dog Website at <http://www.house.gov/melancon/BlueDogs/>.

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