



For Immediate Release
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Blue Dog Coalition Releases Principles for Health Care Reform

Principles address rising costs, promote bipartisanship, fiscal responsibility

Washington, DC - Today, members of the fiscally conservative Democratic Blue Dog Coalition released the official Blue Dog Health Care Reform Principles for the 111th Congress. The principles, developed by the task force and adopted by the full coalition, promote bipartisanship and fiscal responsibility as Congress and the Administration begin to address the urgent need for reform of the nation's failing health care system.

“We cannot get our nation's fiscal house back in order or have long-term economic prosperity until we contain the skyrocketing costs of health care,” said **Representative Mike Ross** (D-AR), Chairman of the Blue Dog Health Care Task Force. “Forty percent of every tax dollar paid today goes to fund Medicare, Medicaid or Social Security; by 2040, that number will reach 100 percent if we do nothing. Working families are struggling because health insurance premiums are rising six to eight times faster than wages. We must make health care affordable, accessible and adequate for every working American, especially those in rural areas. After countless meetings, numerous listening sessions and thoughtful research, these principles represent the Blue Dog Coalition's commitment to fiscal responsibility and mainstream, common-sense values. As we move forward, moderate voices should have a key role in this debate and we must never lose sight of how these reforms will impact small businesses and working families across this country.”

Specifically, the principles address the Blue Dogs' belief that fundamental reform of the nation's health care system is needed to control rising health care costs, increase quality and value, and improve access to coverage and care. Members also emphasized the importance of preserving patient choice and maintaining competition within the marketplace.

“Health care reform provides a tremendous opportunity not only to expand access to coverage but to address the skyrocketing costs of a system badly in need of retooling,” said **Representative Zack Space** (D-OH), Blue Dog Health Care Task Force Vice-Chair. “We must take steps to bring rising premiums under control and ensure that rural America has equal access to health care.”

“Saving money is on all our minds – both in Washington and back home in our districts. In order to reduce the deficit, ensure our tax dollars are spent efficiently and put more money in the pockets of people at home, we must get the cost of health care under control. At the same time, we must improve the quality of care our patients receive,” said **Representative Parker Griffith** (D-AL), Blue Dog Health Care Task Force Vice-Chair and retired radiation oncologist who has been a pioneer in the early diagnosis and treatment of cancer. “The Blue Dog Coalition has brought a clear-headed, accountable and transparent approach to improving health care. The system the Blue Dogs advocate will be uniquely American. As a nation, we have set the standard in so many arenas, and a health care system that helps working Americans afford to visit the doctor and assists small business owners in keeping costs down will again set this high standard and help to get the economy back on the right track.”

“For far too long our nation’s health care policies have been driven by profit rather than providing the best care available at an affordable cost,” said **Representative Marion Berry** (D-AR), Blue Dog Health Care Task Force Vice-Chair and former pharmacist. “Each day many uninsured and underinsured Americans hope they do not become ill. Too many Americans have been forced to make the tough choice between purchasing their prescription drugs and providing their family with basic necessities – this is wrong. As we reform our health care system, we must ensure that all Americans who want health care are able to receive it at an affordable cost and be able to see their preferred doctors. In addition, individuals who are satisfied with their current health care plans should be allowed to maintain that option. As we move forward in shaping one of the most important policies of our time, we must make sure that all options are considered. These policies will impact every American and everyone must have a voice and be heard.”

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. 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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