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**BAUCUS, GRASSLEY SAY NEW REPORT  
SHOULD SPUR IMPROVEMENTS TO DELIVERY  
OF NATIVE AMERICAN HEALTH CARE**

*Finance leaders say report shows relationship between CMS, IHS can be improved*

**Washington, DC** – Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) and Ranking Member Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) said today that a new Government Accountability Office (GAO) report illustrates that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) can do more to coordinate with the Indian Health Service (IHS) to provide health care services to American Indians and Alaska Natives. The Senators said that the report, which details how these two agencies work together, shows that there is room for improvement in coordinating efforts to provide care. Baucus and Grassley plan to work toward identifying ways Medicare, Medicaid and SCHIP can better meet the needs of the American Indian and Alaska Native populations.

**“This report shows us that there are still hurdles that keep all Americans from getting the best health care available, regardless of which agencies help them get it,”** Baucus said. **“We shouldn’t let the distance between IHS and CMS get in the way of quality, affordable health care for American Indians and Alaska Natives. The Federal Government has committed to provide health care to these communities, and I will continue to look for ways to improve both the relationship between IHS and CMS and the health care they provide.”**

**“A lot of work has been done to try to get the Indian Health Care Improvement Act reauthorized,”** Grassley said. **“If we can finish that job, it should go a long way toward improving the working relationship between these two federal agencies and result in better health care for American Indians and Alaska Natives.”**

The Senators asked the GAO to produce the report examining how CMS interacts with IHS and the Native American community, and to identify barriers to Medicare and Medicaid enrollment in Indian Communities. The report found that tribal liaisons and advisory boards were commonly used by states to make sure Native Americans and Alaska Natives had input into CMS decisions and understood the process of applying for benefits. The GAO report makes clear that while CMS and IHS are working together to overcome barriers to enrollment, more can be done to provide health care to American Indians and Alaska Natives. The full text of the report can be found online at <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d08724.pdf>.

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