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Contact: Kristen Hawn (202) 226-9782

Blue Dogs Launch Health Care Task Force

Coalition, Task Force Leaders Participate in White House Health Care Summit

Washington, DC - Today, members of the fiscally conservative Democratic Blue Dog Coalition launched the Blue Dog Health Care Task Force for the 111th Congress. **Rep. Mike Ross** of Arkansas, a leading member of the Coalition and member of the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health, is set to chair the task force, which will lead Blue Dog efforts to ensure Congress advances health care reform legislation that not only addresses the millions of Americans lacking access and affordability of coverage, but also puts the country back on a fiscally sustainable path.

“There are an estimated 45 million Americans who do not have health insurance, of which 18% are children under 18,” said Ross. “We are long overdue for comprehensive health care system reform in this country. The costs of the uninsured treated in emergency rooms are being passed on to hospitals and eventually on to consumers, perpetuating the cycle of rising health costs in America. This Blue Dog Task Force will have an active role in helping to develop ideas and policies that are fiscally responsible and accountable to the American taxpayer.”

Rep. Ross was joined today by **Rep. Baron Hill**, Blue Dog Co-Chair for Policy, at today’s White House Health Care Summit, where they presented President Obama with a letter (attached) communicating the Blue Dogs’ willingness to work with the Administration on meaningful health care reform legislation. **Rep. Jim Cooper** and **Rep. Earl Pomeroy**, both Blue Dog Health Care Task Force members, also participated in today’s summit.

“I hear from folks back home every day about how our healthcare system is broken, saddling families with debt and inaccessible to many,” said Hill. “We need to stop delaying action on this issue and come together, in a bipartisan manner, to address a system that is putting a huge strain on our constituents and this country’s economy.”

“The economic crisis in our country does not afford us any more time to sit back and watch our health care system continue to deteriorate,” said **Rep. Marion Berry** (D-AR), task force vice chairman. “Drug prices continue to rise, individuals continue to lose their health insurance, and

the shortage of medical professionals is a growing barrier to care. I am committed to seeing that every American has access to quality, affordable health care and I look forward to working with the Administration to achieve that.”

“With the cost of health care rising every day, the American people need us in Washington to come together to find common sense answers to the real problems facing our nation,” said **Rep. Parker Griffith** (D-AL), task force vice chairman. “We can find a way to make medical care more affordable and more accessible without crippling small business owners. It will just take cooperation and bipartisan support. The Blue Dogs understand this, and it is critical that we have a seat at the table when health care legislation is crafted.”

“For too many of the people I represent, access to quality health services is out of reach, the product of a system badly encumbered by inefficiencies,” said **Rep. Zack Space** (D-OH), task force vice chairman. “I am honored to be a part of this task force, which will work toward a health reform bill that brings quality care to those in need without reaching into the pocketbooks of working Americans.”

The full Blue Dog Health Care Task Force membership will include: 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. 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/ross/BlueDogs/>.

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