

Wyden Proposes Historic New Health Care Plan; Effort Has Business and Labor Support

Wyden Press Release--December 13, 2006

Washington, D.C. – Following 60 years of gridlock on a desperately-needed overhaul of the nation's health care system, U.S. Senator Ron Wyden, a member of the Finance Committee, today unveiled a groundbreaking new proposal to provide affordable, high quality, private health coverage for everyone regardless of where they work or live.

The plan, known as the Healthy Americans Act:

- guarantees private health care coverage that cannot be taken away for all Americans;
- provides benefits for all Americans equal to those of Members of Congress;
- provides incentives for individuals and insurers to focus on prevention, wellness and disease management;
- provides tough cost containment and saves \$1.48 trillion over 10 years; and
- is fully paid for by spending the \$2.2 trillion currently spent on health care in America.

Speaking at a morning news conference, Wyden was joined by a diverse group of individuals concerned that health care in the United States is on life support. Joining the Senator were Andy Stern President of SEIU, a 1.8 million-member labor group; Steve Burd, Chairman, President and CEO of Safeway, a Fortune 50 employer; Ron Pollack from Families USA, a leader on health care for the low-income; Mike Roach, a 30-year member of the National Federation of Independent Businesses and small business owner from Oregon; CEO Bob Beal, a medium-size business owner from Oregon; Malene Davis, President and CEO of Capital Hospice; Don Schumacher, Executive Director of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization; and Pat Maryland, Chairperson, Citizens' Health Care Working Group.

"The Healthy Americans Act provides a guarantee: health coverage for every American that is at least as good as Members of Congress receive and can never be taken away," Wyden said. **"The Act provides universal coverage for no more money than our country spends today. Better care, financial health and security, no increase in costs."**

"We're here because it is time to fix health care," Wyden added. **"After decades of talk and study, it's time for action. Fixing health care is not as complicated as one might think. Start by making care more affordable. That means eliminating inefficiency, beginning with when a person signs up for coverage. Get citizens good quality outpatient health care so they don't go to hospital emergency rooms. Reward prevention – health care, not sick care. Beef up the quality of care by reducing medical errors in our hospitals."**

Under The Healthy Americans Act individuals will choose from a variety of plans offered in their state providing coverage similar to what is currently available to Members of Congress. State-based Health Help Agencies (HHAs) will guide individuals through the enrollment process. HHAs will provide unbiased information about the state's competing private health plans that will in turn empower individuals—rather than

For those who already have existing health problems, occupation, gender, genetic information and age will no longer be allowed to impact your eligibility or the price you pay for insurance.

In 2006, approximately 61 percent of employers provide coverage, down eight percent from 2000. Over that same time period, premiums have incr