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National Patient Advocate Foundation Encouraged by New Senate Health Care Reform Bill Provisions, Urges Additional Patient Protection Measures in Final Legislation

Nation's Leading Patient Advocacy Organization Pleased with Recent Compromises to Improve Patients' Access to Care; Asks Senate to Move Toward Final Vote Quickly

WASHINGTON, D.C. (December 23, 2009) – The National Patient Advocate Foundation (NPAF) – a national, non-profit organization dedicated to the mission of creating avenues of improved patient access to health care through public policy reform at the state and federal levels – today praised Senate leadership for their tireless work on historic health care reform, and encouraged lawmakers to continue their steadfast work on this important issue in the weeks to come.

“We are grateful for the impressive progress made in both chambers of Congress in advancing health care reform, and by our Senators’ current dedication to working nearly around the clock in order to complete the votes required to pass reform legislation,” said Nancy Davenport-Ennis, Founder and CEO of NPAF. “We urge all Senators to continue this positive momentum and vote in support of the health care bill on Christmas Eve, bringing us one step closer to enacting meaningful and comprehensive reform for all Americans.”

NPAF is especially pleased with many provisions in the Senate bill manager’s amendment that would greatly benefit patients with chronic, life-threatening and disabling conditions. These include the elimination of preexisting condition coverage exclusions for children under age 19; the prohibition of annual dollar limits on coverage; and the requirement of coverage for routine costs associated with clinical trials, championed by Senators Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX).

As the House and Senate look ahead to conferencing reform legislation, NPAF urges lawmakers to incorporate additional patient protection measures as they work together to finalize health care reform legislation to be sent to the President. Specifically, the following improvements are needed in order to effectively improve chronically and severely ill Americans’ access to quality health care:

- Apply insurance reforms, including the elimination of preexisting condition exclusions, to all markets including large group and self-insured;
- Provide a transitional reduction in the preexisting condition look-back and waiting periods (as in the House bill);
- Eliminate lifetime and annual coverage limits, on both dollar value and service/disease specific; and
- Provide at least \$2 billion a year to fund the high-risk pool for high-risk patients, and limit age rating in the risk pool at 2 to 1.

“As we approach the holidays, we at NPAF and the millions of patients we serve in conjunction with our companion organization, the Patient Advocate Foundation (PAF), are thankful for our lawmakers’ work to improve the quality of our health care system and their foresight in including policy provisions that will have a measurable impact on patients’ access to necessary care,” added Davenport-Ennis. “Our work must not stop here, and we will continue to look to our lawmakers throughout the holiday season and beyond to help us make certain that our nation succeeds in providing affordable, high-quality and effective health care for all.”

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