

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 21, 2009

Contact: Kate Cyrul: (202) 341-0207

Bergen Kenny: (202) 536-6954

HARKIN CALLS FIRST PROCEDURAL VOTE ON HEALTH REFORM A PIVOTAL MOMENT

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) today issued the following statement after the Senate voted to conclude debate and proceed to consideration of The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. Harkin is Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee.

“Tonight, we have taken the first step toward bringing common sense health reform to the American people. Of course, just as we saw in 1935, when Congress voted to establish Social Security, and in 1965, when Congress created the Medicare program, defenders of the status quo bitterly opposed this step forward. But their opposition did not work then, and will not work this time around, because the American people want an end to insurance company abuses and overpriced health care. Americans know that the status quo is unacceptable. And they know The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act is a giant step forward for the health and economic security of the American people.

“What is clear to every American is that the current system is hugely dysfunctional, wasteful, and abusive. Americans can be denied coverage because of a real or trumped-up preexisting condition or if they get a serious illness. They can be charged much higher rates based on their gender, age, or medical history. The sad fact is that even Americans who have health insurance know that they and their families are just one serious illness away from financial catastrophe.

“This urgent need was highlighted in a recent report from the Business Roundtable that showed without reform, by 2019, employment-based spending on health care for large employers will be 166 percent higher than today on a per-employee basis.

“With tonight’s vote, we have arrived at a pivotal moment, an historic moment, in the decades-long march toward passing comprehensive health reform. Tonight we say the Senate will bring The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act to the floor and we will work toward lowering costs, guaranteeing affordable coverage for all Americans and improving the quality of care in America. And we will make history by, at long last, passing comprehensive health reform.”