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HARKIN STATEMENT ON THE PRESIDENT'S STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) today issued the following statement in response to President Obama's State of the Union address. Harkin chairs the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, as well as the Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee.

“Tonight the President spoke to the American people in real terms about the state of our economy and the challenges of the year ahead. He outlined a roadmap that, if followed with bipartisan support in Congress, can reduce our deficit, rebuild our economy and create a new foundation of prosperity for American families and businesses.

“The President reaffirmed tonight that it is essential to enact strong and comprehensive health reform. Half measures won't protect the American people from skyrocketing costs and insurance company abuses. I look forward to working with the President and with my Senate and House colleagues to finish the job we started more than a year ago.

“I also applaud the President's investment in education. I am particularly pleased with the increased funding for K-12 education and look forward to working with the President to help educators improve our public schools. So too am I encouraged that the President has proposed incentives to make child care more affordable, which is critical to helping families work while ensuring children start school ready to learn.

“As we continue to work on measures to create jobs and economic opportunity in the short term, it is important that we also build families' future security as well. The recommendations the President offered tonight recognize the everyday pressures that families are facing, and are important first steps to help them succeed and build long-term security.

“And as we work to transform America into a genuine ‘wellness society,’ it is encouraging to have the support of this Administration, which recognizes that America is in danger of raising the first generation of children who will live sicker and die younger than the generation before them. I am thrilled to see the First Lady taking steps to address the childhood obesity epidemic.

“In the year ahead, we will also renew our commitment to child nutrition programs, an effort that began while I was Chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee. Today, as a senior member of the Committee, I look forward to seeing that process through by expanding access to these programs for vulnerable Americans and ensuring healthier food options are available.

“Washington can and should work for the people and with the agenda ahead, we can get the country back on track.”