

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 25, 2009

Publicity Contact: Eileen Duhne
eduhne@comcast.net 415/459-2573

Crusading Physician Calls for Resignation of Key “Reform” Senator
**SENATOR BAUCUS CASHES IN
AS HEALTH REFORM BOTTOMS OUT**

(San Francisco, CA) In today’s Congress, even the most blatant venality is tolerated, if it is even noticed. But according to Len Saputo, MD—health-care reform crusader and noted author—rarely has one Congressperson flaunted norms of financial decency as has Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.), chair of the Senate Finance Committee, the lead Congressional committee working on health care reform.

As far back as 2007, Senator Baucus began holding hearings and making preparations for this year’s reform debate. “That’s when the big money began to flow into the Senator’s coffers from all sectors of the health care industry,” Dr. Saputo pointed out. “A flood of political gifts from all sectors of the industry he is regulating reached a peak in the first half of 2009, just as the national debate took center stage.”

What’s been the tally for the Senator? In 2008 alone, Baucus received \$1,148,775 from the health sector and \$285,850 from the insurance sector. The high rate of cash flow continued into 2009, until Baucus quietly began refusing contributions from health-care political action committees after June 1. Why? Yet, this weak gesture toward basic ethics did not even apply to lobbyists or corporate executives, who have continued to make sizable contributions, according to the *Washington Post* on July 21.

“And that’s why, in light of this thinly veiled bribery, I call today for Senator Baucus to resign his position as chair of this crucial committee,” Saputo said.

Of course, Baucus’s behavior is only emblematic of a malady that taints most of Congress, especially with respect to the health-care lobby, which leads all other industries in donations to Congressional candidates. Health-industry lobbyists gave nearly \$170 million to federal lawmakers in 2007 and 2008, with 54 percent going to Democrats, according to data compiled by the Center for Responsive Politics. Charles E. Grassley (R-Iowa) and other senators whose votes could prove crucial in a final health-care reform deal, as well as the leaders of five key committees leading the debate, received the greatest amounts. Grassley, the key Republican on the Senate Finance Committee, has received more than \$2 million. House Ways and Means Chairman Charles B. Rangel (D-N.Y.) took in \$1.6 million from the health sector over the past two years; ranking Republican Dave Camp (Mich.) received nearly \$1 million.

But Baucus stands out for having collected \$3 million from the health and insurance sectors from 2003 to 2008, about 20 percent of the total, the data show.

###

