

The Maine Heritage Policy Center

MEDIA ADVISORY

Here Are Five Questions For Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius

Portland, Maine, September 3, 2009 Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius will be in Maine today to discuss health care reform options with select groups of people who already support the Obama Administration's plans for new national controls of America's health care system.

Tarren Bragdon, chief executive officer of The Maine Heritage Policy Center notes *"this is the biggest topic in the country, and it's unfortunate that the Obama Administration prefers to collect their citizen input from pre-screened groups of supporters, in closed-door meetings."*

Mr. Bragdon continued, *"We were not invited, but if any members of the press have the opportunity to speak with Secretary Sebelius about health care reform, The Maine Heritage Policy Center has five suggested questions."*

- 1)** Maine's government plan called DirigoChoice has been a costly failure, with a 74 percent premium increase in four years, and a new 2.4 percent tax on health claims paid. Despite more than \$155 million spent on this experiment, just 3 percent of Maine's uninsured have this coverage. Given Maine's disastrous experience with its state-based "public option," why is Congress still insisting on a similar program for the whole country?
- 2)** The House and Senate bills include a massive Medicaid expansion. Maine already leads the nation with more than 20 percent of our non-elderly population on Medicaid, so how many more Maine people should be added to the Medicaid rolls? Also, would this expansion be another unfunded mandate from Washington, or will federal dollars fully fund the program?
- 3)** Maine is one of five states with the types of health insurance regulations (guaranteed issue and community rating) advocated by President Obama. These regulations have destroyed competition here, and we have the second most expensive health insurance premiums in the country and just one dominant carrier (Anthem) available to people buying health insurance outside their employer. Why is the President trying to make the other 49 states look more like Maine's expensive and uncompetitive health insurance market rather than making Maine look more like the rest of America?
- 4)** The President reported that the new ten-year budget deficit is projected to be \$9 trillion. Will the President commit to not increasing this debt burden on our children and grandchildren under the banner of health reform?
- 5)** Both Senators Snowe and Collins have committed to pursuing bi-partisan health reform. Will the President commit to only having a bi-partisan solution to something as important as health reform?

We look forward to Secretary Sebelius' answers to any of these questions.

MEDIA OFFER: Please feel free to contact Tarren Bragdon or Martin Sheehan of The Maine Heritage Policy Center for any questions or comments on health care reform. Our research includes important comparisons with the reforms being discussed in Washington, D.C. and the same ideas that have been attempted in Maine over the last two decades.

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The Maine Heritage Policy Center is a 501 (c) 3 nonprofit, nonpartisan research and educational organization based in Portland, Maine. The Maine Heritage Policy Center formulates and promotes free market, conservative public policies in the areas of economic growth, tax and fiscal matters, health care, education, constitutional law and government transparency - providing solutions that will benefit all the people of Maine. Contributions to The Maine Heritage Policy Center are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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