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WYDEN, HATCH COMMEND CITIZENS' WORKING GROUP Final Report Completes Plan Seeking Citizens' Input on Solving Health Care Crisis

Washington – Sens. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) and Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) today praised the efforts of the Citizens' Working Group to provide Congress fresh insight into reforming the nation's health care system. Today's report is the culmination of a national public discussion guided by the Working Group that will now be presented to Congress and the President.

"Thanks to the Citizens' Health Care Working Group, the American people are being given a say in what they want from their health care system. For more than two years, members of the Working Group sat down with the American public to learn what they want health care to be like," said Wyden. "This report should serve as a call to action to do more than band aid a sick system – it should work to create a system that gets all Americans the essentials of health care."

"This is a fresh approach to one of the nation's most critical issues," Hatch said. "There's no question there are problems with our health care delivery system. But we have even more problems when the government tries to dictate reform with a top-down, one-size-fits-all solution. The Working Group did something no one has ever done before. They talked with those who are truly affected – patients, physicians and providers – to help us see some ideas that those in Washington may have overlooked."

The 15-member Citizens' Working Group is a product of the Health Care that Works for All Americans Act, a law authored by Wyden and Hatch in 2003. The group was tasked with compiling a report detailing how the \$1.8 trillion dollars now spent annually on health care is truly allocated; leading a national discussion online and in town hall meetings about whether and how the current health care system should be changed; and reporting to Congress on the views of the American people. The Wyden-Hatch law also requires all Congressional health committees to hold hearings on the health care reforms recommended by the Working Group.

"I hope the next step, congressional hearings, will serve as the spark to not just debate what should be done, but to move toward solutions," Wyden said.

"I'm looking forward to reviewing this report in detail," Hatch said. "I've always maintained that real health care reform will come from the people, not bureaucrats in Washington. I hope this effort will invigorate Congress into passing meaningful reform that the American people can accept."

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