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White House Issues Official Invitation for Health Reform Summit

AHIP, Washington Update, 2/19/2010

The White House recently addressed a letter to congressional leaders, officially inviting them to participate in the February 25 bipartisan summit on health reform.

The letter explains that President Obama will deliver opening remarks and moderate a discussion on four topics: (1) insurance reforms; (2) cost containment; (3) expanding coverage; and (4) the impact health reform will have on deficit reduction. Prior to the meeting, the White House will post on-line the text of a proposed health insurance reform package. Earlier today, President Obama appeared at a town hall meeting in Las Vegas where he discussed the health reform proposal he is planning to release at this event, explaining that it will focus on three key areas: health insurance reforms; cost control; and expanding access to coverage.

The list of invitees for the February 25 Health Reform Summit includes the Senate and House leadership for both Democrats and Republicans, as well as the chairmen and ranking members of key committees. In addition, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), House Republican Leader John Boehner (R-OH), Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV), and Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) each are invited to designate four additional members to participate. In addition to the President, other Administration officials will include Vice President Joe Biden, HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, and Nancy-Ann DeParle from the White House Office of Health Reform.

President Establishes National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform

At a February 18 White House event, President Obama signed an executive order officially establishing a bipartisan National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform.

The commission is charged with approving a report by December 1, 2010 that provides recommendations for improving the nation's fiscal situation in the medium term and achieving fiscal sustainability on a long-term basis. More specifically, the recommendations are required to include steps for balancing the federal budget,



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excluding interest payments on the debt, by 2015. The commission's report must be approved by at least 14 of the commission's 18 members.

The commission will be co-chaired by Erskine Bowles (D) who served as White House Chief of Staff in the Clinton Administration and former Wyoming Senator Alan Simpson (R). The remaining 16 members of the commission will be appointed as follows: four additional members by the President and three members each by the Speaker of the House, the Senate Majority Leader, the House Republican Leader, and the Senate Republican Leader.

While discussing the commission's responsibilities, President Obama stated: "When I walked into the door of the White House, our government was spending about 25 percent of GDP but taking in only about 16 percent of GDP. Without action, the accumulated weight of that structural deficit, of ever-increasing debt, will hobble our economy, it will cloud our future, and it will saddle every child in America with an intolerable burden." He expressed confidence that the commission, along with his Administration's other policies, will succeed in "finally putting America on the path towards fiscal reform and fiscal responsibility."

The American Senior Benefits Association (ASBA) is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit association where membership is completely free. ASBA is committed to lifestyle enhancement through benefits, advocacy and education for the over-50 population. ASBA concentrates its efforts on the issues that are of greatest concern to its members. Through its partners and programs, ASBA members receive product and service discounts, as well as other benefits. Current ASBA membership stands at over 500,000 nationally.