

An Ally in the War to Improve Health Care

SEN. TOM HARKIN CHOSEN TO HELP CRAFT REFORM BILL; WILL CHIROPRACTIC BENEFIT?

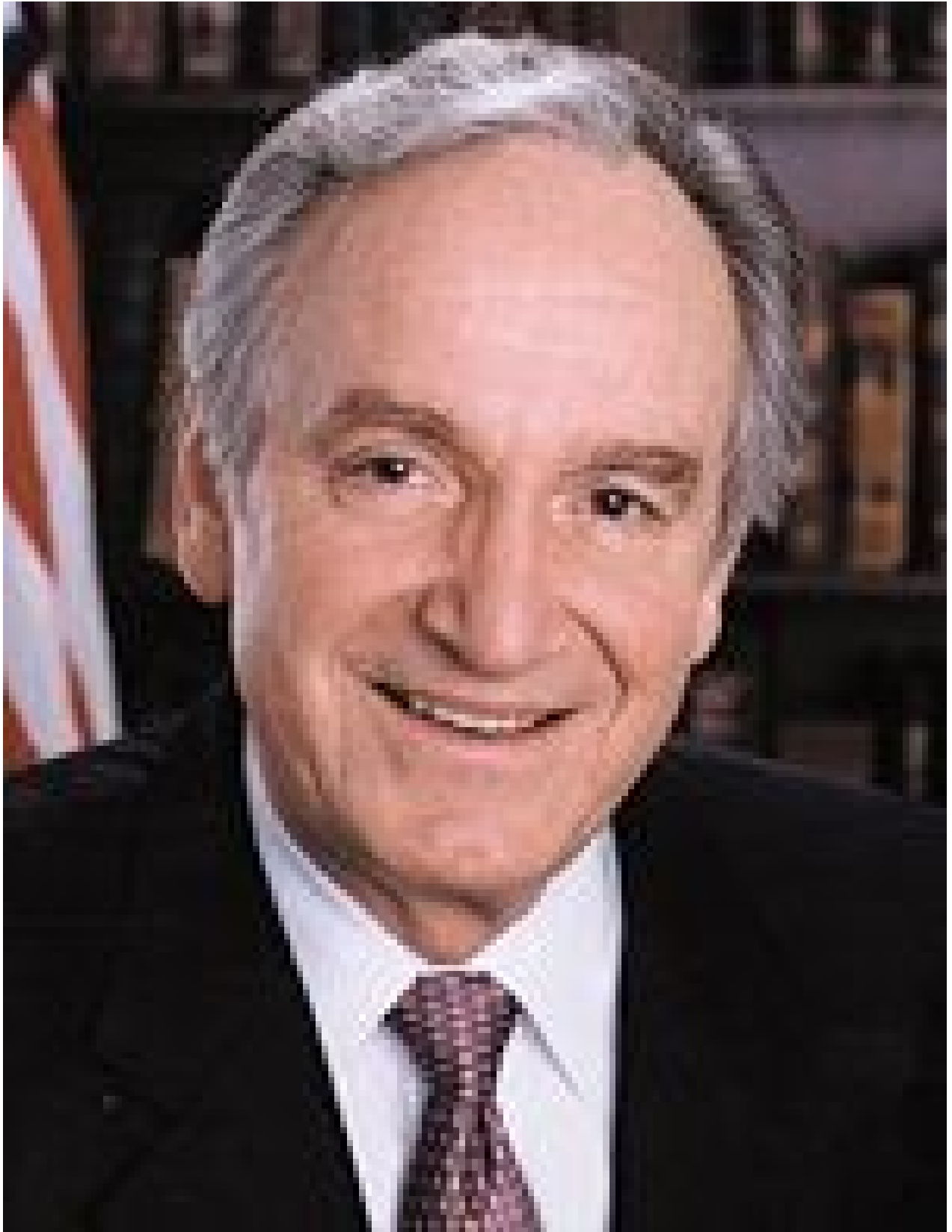
Editorial Staff

There's no question that health care was a pressing issue during the most recent presidential campaign. The fact that more than 75 percent of all U.S. medical expenditures go toward paying for chronic conditions such as heart disease, cancer and diabetes should be of great concern - particularly when you consider that 45 million Americans don't currently have health insurance. As a result, what may be a preventable or easily correctable health problem can become a chronic condition for those who cannot afford appropriate care.

Chiropractors certainly appreciate the value of preventive care and the need to change the current system that restricts access and denies coverage, and fortunately, they are not alone. A longtime chiropractic advocate is now in a unique position to help improve the nation's health. On Nov. 18, 2008, Senator Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) accepted an invitation from Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.), chairman of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP), to lead a working group created to craft the prevention and public-health components of the health care reform bill.

Regular readers of *DC* should be well-aware of the many contributions Sen. Harkin has made to the chiropractic profession in the form of pro-chiropractic legislative initiatives spanning several decades. Back in 1996, he was named *DC's* "Chiropractic Champion of the Year" for his ongoing support of the profession. That year, in a speech to the Iowa Chiropractic Society, Sen. Harkin made his stance on chiropractic clear:

"I won't consider the health care battle won until every American can get coverage for chiropractic care, and discrimination against providers is outlawed once and for all."



In accepting the working group position, Sen. Harkin said: "I am very grateful to my dear friend, Senator Kennedy, for this opportunity to contribute to real health care reform for our country. I have long believed that prevention and wellness are the keys to solving our health care crisis. We must re-create America as a 'wellness society' focused on fitness, good nutrition and disease prevention; ultimately keeping people out of the hospital in the first place. I look forward to tackling this problem with my colleagues on the HELP Committee and our chairman, Senator Kennedy."

Under Sen. Kennedy's direction, three working groups will concentrate on specific areas deemed essential to comprehensive reform: prevention and public health; improvements in the quality of care; and insurance coverage. Sen. Harkin will lead the working group on prevention and public health, Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-Md.) will lead the working group on improvements in quality, and Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.) will lead the working group on insurance coverage.

"Our committee is fortunate to have the services of major leaders who are committed to improving health care for the American people," said Sen. Kennedy. Senator Harkin, Senator Mikulski and Senator Clinton have generously offered to step forward and assume an expanded role on critical aspects of health reform. I commend them for their leadership, and I look forward ... to working with them, with all our colleagues on the committee and throughout Congress, and with the Obama Administration to achieve the goal at long last of quality, affordable health care for all Americans."

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