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**From:** Wanzco, Julia (Snowe)  
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CONTACTS 202-224-5344

[John Gentzel - Communications Director](#)

[Julia Wanzco - Press Secretary](#)  
(202) 224-1304- Direct

### **Snowe Responds to President's Speech to Congress on Health Care Reform**

*While many elements dovetail with efforts of Gang of Six, Snowe "would have preferred that the President take the issue of the public option off the table"*

**WASHINGTON D.C.** – U.S. Senator Olympia J. Snowe (R-Maine), a senior member of the Senate Finance Committee, and one of the bipartisan group of six committee members -- including Committee Chairman Baucus and Ranking Member Grassley -- that is working to draft a health care reform bill, released the following statement this evening following President Obama's address to Congress:

"I appreciate that President Obama shared many of the details of his vision for health reform at this pivotal and historic moment, and signaled a willingness to work across party lines," Snowe said. "At the same time, as I continue to oppose the inclusion of a public option in any package, I would have preferred that the issue were taken off the table as I have urged the President – given that any bill with a public option will not pass the Senate and this divisive subject is unnecessarily delaying our ability to reach common ground.

"The fact is, all Senate Republicans as well as some Democrats do not support the public option, which has also been generating concern across the country about a government takeover of health care that distracts from the legitimate necessity of providing more accessible and affordable health care for all Americans. I am, however, encouraged the President recognized that we cannot leave this imperative to chance – and acknowledged the safety net plan I have proposed is a 'constructive' idea 'worth exploring.' Such a fallback plan would be offered if, after we have implemented landmark insurance market reforms, private insurers fail to deliver the affordable coverage Americans require."

Snowe continued, "I am pleased that many of the other elements he discussed dovetail with those we continue to work on in the bipartisan Gang of Six – that, first and foremost, we maintain the sanctity of the doctor-patient relationship and choice in selecting physicians; that those who are satisfied with their coverage today can keep it tomorrow by building on and strengthening our employer-based system; that plans will be affordable for those currently with and without coverage; and that insurance companies cannot deny coverage to any American.

"As the President also noted, it is essential that we reverse the skyrocketing costs of health care – including common sense initiatives related to medical malpractice – and to make certain that health reform does not add to the deficit. I was particularly pleased to hear the President's proposal will require additional spending cuts if projected savings aren't realized – as it is vital we maintain budget neutrality as fundamental to any final package – particularly given the current and projected levels of federal deficits. Moving forward, I will continue my work within the Gang of Six to produce a consensus bill that will curb spiraling health care costs and ensure the health security of all Americans."

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