

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 18, 2008

Help Stop the Ravages of Meth Mouth
Become a Cosponsor of the
Meth Mouth Prevention and Community Recovery Act (S. 1906) and the
Meth Mouth Correctional Costs and Reentry Support Act (S. 1907)

Dear Colleague:

An unforeseen consequence of the methamphetamine epidemic has been the growing need for costly dental care. Nowhere is the problem more evident than the dentists' chairs in rural communities and correctional facilities.

In areas where methamphetamine use is highly concentrated, more and more dentists are encountering patients with a distinct, painful and often debilitating pattern of oral decay. The condition (known as "meth mouth") is characterized by teeth that are blackened, stained, rotting and crumbling or falling apart. Some believe meth mouth is caused by the drug's acidic nature, its ability to dry the mouth, the tendency of users to grind and clench their teeth, and a drug-induced craving for sugary drinks. Often, the damage is so severe that extraction is the only viable treatment option.

Meth mouth is difficult to treat, and can pose serious patient management issues for dentists. Moreover, jail and prison dental costs have risen sharply as the methamphetamine epidemic has become more widespread. By some accounts, more than 30 percent of prison inmates suffer from meth mouth, and about 40 percent of correctional dental spending goes toward repairing or removing methamphetamine-ravaged teeth.

Dental problems are common among drug users. Many do not care for their teeth regularly, and most do not see a dentist often. But methamphetamine seems to be taking a unique and horrific toll inside its users' mouths.

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To address this growing health crisis, we are seeking your support for two bills.

- (a) The *Meth Mouth Prevention and Community Recovery Act (S. 1906)* will fund local, school-based initiatives to educate primary and elementary school students about the dangers of meth use. It will also provide for enhanced research and professional training in substance use disorders, oral health and the provision of dental care.
- (b) The *Meth Mouth Correctional Costs and Reentry Support Act (S. 1907)* will enhance federal research on the oral health status of jail and prison inmates, and the provision of dental care in correctional facilities. It will also make short-term, needs-based grants available for the hiring of ancillary correctional facility dentists.

We encourage you to help end this epidemic and become a co-sponsor. Please contact either Heather O'Loughlin (4-3632) with Senator Baucus' office or Lauren Komatsu (4-5641) with Senator Coleman's office to sign onto the *Meth Mouth Prevention and Community Recovery Act* and *Meth Mouth Correctional Costs and Reentry Support Act*.

Sincerely,



Max Baucus



Norm Coleman