



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Leahy Introduces Legislation to Provide Relief for Free Health Care Clinics**

*Burlington (Thursday, August 6, 2009)* With health care for the uninsured topping the list of critical topics in DC, Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) has introduced legislation to expand the scope of the Federal Tort Claims Act (FTCA) to provide malpractice coverage for board members, employees, contractors and officers of free clinics. The current law provides medical malpractice coverage for physicians who volunteer in free clinics. The expanded coverage will parallel what is currently available to federal qualified health care centers.

Currently, free clinics across the country spend thousands of dollars annually to purchase malpractice coverage. “These are funds that could be directed to providing health care to the uninsured.” said Leahy. “This is especially true in States like Vermont, where free clinics make a significant impact serving those in rural areas.”

This legislation would benefit the seven free clinics in Vermont, as well as all free clinics across the country that provide essential preventative health services to hundreds of thousands of uninsured. “This legislation is a significant step toward increasing the capacity of free clinics to provide health care services to the uninsured across the nation,” stated Amy Hamlin, Executive Director of the Volunteers in Medicine national network of free clinics. “Senator Leahy’s attention to the critical need to eliminate barriers to volunteerism in the health care arena will ensure that the critical safety net provided by free clinics will continue to support our country’s uninsured.”

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