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WASHINGTON, DC: Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar today released the following statement regarding the proposal in the House of Representatives to repeal the Affordable Care Act and the Indian Health Care Improvement Act

“The Affordable Care Act is a vital tool for Native American communities that are working to improve quality of life, overcome health care disparities, and improve wellness and health in Indian Country,” said Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar. “A vote to repeal the Affordable Health Care Act would only turn back the clock on the real progress we are making toward ensuring that Native Americans have access to quality, affordable health care.”

“The Affordable Care Act included landmark legislation that permanently reauthorizes the Indian Health Care Improvement Act, which is so important to modernizing and improving the health care provided by the Indian Health Service to American Indians and Alaska Natives,” added Salazar. “Without the Affordable Care Act, Native Americans will continue to face escalating costs, deep health care disparities, and growing health challenges.”

In addition to permanently reauthorizing the Indian Health Care Improvement Act, the Affordable Care Act:

- Includes important tax exclusions for individual Native Americans whose tribes have opted to purchase health insurance for their members.
- Allows tribes who operate programs under the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act to purchase federal insurance for employees.
- American Indians and Alaska Natives are exempt from tax penalties for not enrolling in an exchange plan.
- Expands Medicaid coverage to individual with incomes up to 133% of the poverty level starting in 2014.