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**PRESS RELEASE
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Interview on radio or TV:

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ABC for Health: Urges Congress to Strengthen Patient Advocacy in National Health Reform Bills

Madison, WI – “Whatever shape health reform takes, Americans will face a new system with new choices, rules, and regulations,” said Bobby Peterson, public interest attorney and director of ABC for Health. On December 4, ABC for Health filmed a new edition of its popular, online policy talk show, the HealthWatch WatchDog, to spotlight elements of advocacy in the House and Senate health reform bills, and to encourage stronger patient advocacy elements. “People will need help navigating both public and private health care bureaucracies and red tape. For most people it is nearly impossible to deal with an illness while challenging errors, denials, or other administrative barriers.”

Peterson detailed items in the House and Senate bills, such as Health Benefits Plan Ombudsman, Public Option Ombudsman and health insurance consumer assistance programs. “We will be watching over these next weeks as the debate continues, and as new amendments are introduced,” continued Peterson.

Peterson would like to see stronger patient advocacy services through Health Benefits Counselors, health care coordination through Health Care Navigators, and local monitoring and community-based feedback through local coalitions of key stakeholders. Peterson presented these important, patient advocacy elements of health reform in a web cast presentation from the ABC for Health Studio. The web cast is available to the media and the public at this link: <http://76.205.39.193/mediasiteabc/Viewer/?peid=4004f6e1-4742-4a73-85d9-9a5cbbdbccd6>

“Health reform must include a program of strong individual and community advocacy designed to protect the rights of health care consumers. People have trouble *now* navigating public and private insurance options. Introducing new rules, penalties and regulations will only add to the complexity for people seeking health coverage and care,” concluded Peterson.

ABC for Health is a Wisconsin-based, nonprofit, public interest law firm dedicated to linking children and families, particularly those with special health care needs, to health care benefits and services. ABC for Health’s mission is to provide information, advocacy tools, legal services and expert support needed to obtain, maintain, and finance health care coverage and services.

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