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Congressional Progressive Caucus

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82 Strong and Growing: Open to New and Different Ideas

November 19, 2009

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232 Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-321 Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Madam Speaker & Leader Reid:

On behalf of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, we write to thank you for your leadership in bringing important health care reform legislation to a vote, and to bring the priorities of the Caucus to your attention.

A Strong Public Option - To provide affordable coverage for millions of currently uninsured Americans, health care reform legislation must include a public option that is available without delay. Runaway health costs are putting an unbearable strain on both private and public budgets. There are viable arguments to be made about how to structure public health reform, but we do not support a "trigger" because delay is intolerable.

Similarly, a law allowing certain states or regions to deny their citizens access to a public health care program will badly undermine the program's viability. It would be wrong to obtain a small handful of votes in Congress by including an opt-out clause. Those votes would be bought at the expense of tens of millions of Americans living in states likely to opt out for ideological reasons.

Affordability - Insurance, whether public or private, must be affordable for all Americans. We will continue to fight to ensure the sufficiency of subsidies within the Health Exchange to provide affordability of premiums for those who do not currently have health insurance. We must maintain and strengthen cost containment provisions for premiums to ensure affordability for those who already have insurance but could lose coverage without mechanisms to rein in spiraling costs.

Antitrust Exemptions - We strongly support repealing the health insurance industry exemption from antitrust laws. Health insurance should be treated the same as the rest of the economy for the sake of competitive fairness.

Reproductive Choice - We urge you to uphold current law regarding a woman's reproductive health. The Stupak-Pitts amendment eliminates constitutionally protected reproductive health options, and it must be removed from the bill.

Verification - The Health Insurance Exchange must be widely accessible. No citizenship or residency verification should be required for purchase of insurance in the Health Insurance Exchange. Additional verification requirements could prevent individuals from purchasing health care coverage with their own funds.

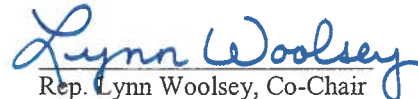
Single Payer - We continue to support the inclusion of a provision that will allow states to offer a state single-payer plan. We recommend language that provides this flexibility for states.

We look forward to working with you to pass the strongest health care reform bill possible.

Sincerely,



Rep. Raul M. Grijalva, Co-Chair



Rep. Lynn Woolsey, Co-Chair