

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 21, 2008

The Honorable Barack Obama
President-Elect
Washington, DC 20270

Dear President-Elect Obama:

As former colleagues in the United States Senate, we would like to congratulate you on your election as the 44th President of the United States and offer our commitment to working with you in a bipartisan fashion to reform our health care system.

As the next President, you will face many challenges, with restoring our nation's struggling economy heading the list. With most Americans getting their health care through their employers, the growing numbers of layoffs also mean that more and more of our citizens are not only losing their jobs, they are losing their health care.

As Members who have offered our support for bipartisan healthcare proposals, we respectfully suggest that our current economic challenges call for speedy reform of our health care system. There is no doubt that health care costs are a leading economic concern for families; in fact, medical bills account for nearly half of all bankruptcy filings. Americans' economic insecurities will persist and worsen unless the Congress and the White House begin to work together early next year to tackle the challenges of health care costs and coverage. An efficient and more equitable health care system will unleash economic growth and reduce the financial drain our current health care system is having on American families' budgets and the economy as a whole.

In the coming months, you will be receiving suggestions and proposals for health care reform from Congressional leaders and stakeholders. We see this as a sign that after decades of debate, Congress is finally ready to tackle what is unquestionably one of the most important and challenging issues facing our nation.

Over the last two years, we have come together as Democrats and Republicans to cosponsor the Healthy Americans Act because we believe that for health reform to succeed it must be bipartisan. We also believe that in these tough economic times with soaring budget deficits, it is critical to fix our broken health care system without breaking the bank. We believe Congress must explore financing mechanisms that would maximize the use of existing health care dollars and ideally produce savings in the future. To that end, it will be critical to work with the Congressional Budget Office and Joint Committee on Taxation to find ways to meet health care reform goals while also maintaining fiscal responsibility.

While bipartisan agreement on details is yet to be achieved, we believe the following principles outline the best way to reform the nation's health care system and create the best "roadmap" to build bipartisan consensus on reform. We would like to work with you to enact legislation that accomplishes these goals:

- Ensure that all Americans have health care coverage;
- Make sure health care coverage is affordable and portable;
- Implement strong private insurance market reforms;
- Modernize federal tax rules for health coverage;
- Promote improved disease prevention and wellness activities, as well as better management of chronic illnesses;
- Make health care prices and choices more transparent so that consumers and providers can make the best choices for their health and health care dollars; and
- Improve the quality and value of health care services.

We would welcome the opportunity to sit down with you and your advisors to discuss how we can work together to advance these principles and enact meaningful health care reform legislation in the 111th Congress.

Thank you for your time and consideration and we look forward to fruitful discussions in the future.

Sincerely,



Senator Ron Wyden



Senator Robert F. Bennett



Senator Lamar Alexander



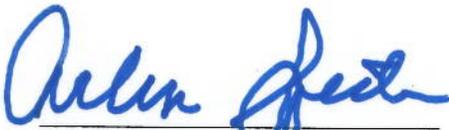
Senator Maria Cantwell



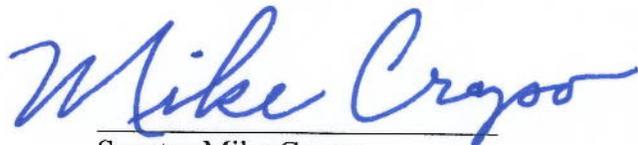
Senator Thomas Carper



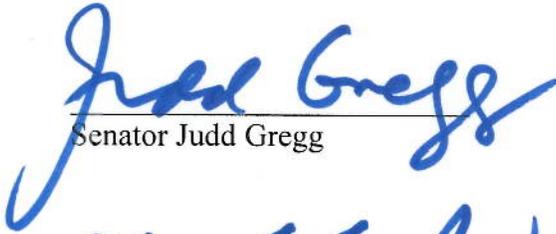
Senator Norm Coleman



Senator Arlen Specter



Senator Mike Crapo



Senator Judd Gregg



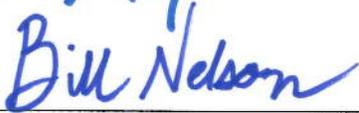
Senator Daniel K. Inouye



Senator Mary Landrieu



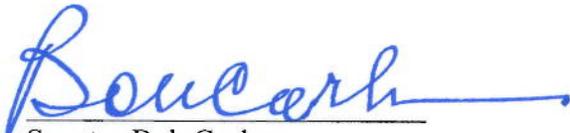
Senator Joseph Lieberman



Senator Bill Nelson



Senator Debbie Stabenow



Senator Bob Corker