

August 19, 2009

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the millions of members represented by our unions, we strongly urge you to move forward and pass the America's Affordable Health Choices Act (H.R. 3200) without delay. Despite the significant resources our nation invests in the health care system, it fails to routinely deliver affordable quality care. Comprehensive health care reform is an urgent economic and moral imperative. Maintaining the status quo is unacceptable. Working families cannot afford to wait any longer.

We urge you to support a progressive federal income tax surcharge on America's top earners. These revenues are vital for the House to approve meaningful health care reform. Given that 47 million Americans are without health coverage, millions more are underinsured, and health care costs are skyrocketing for everyone, delay is unacceptable. We support a surcharge because it is the right tax policy. During the last eight years of the Bush administration, the gap between the wealthiest Americans and working families widened greatly and the wealthy received disproportionate benefits from the Bush tax cuts. In contrast, working families suffered stagnant incomes and received a small share of tax cuts while experiencing cuts in the government services on which they rely. The wealthiest should pay their fair share to help enact health care reform.

Given that experts estimate health care costs for the average American family of four will rise \$1,800 per year without congressional action, a surcharge is sensible. For example, the surcharge in H.R. 3200, which the Committee on Ways and Means approved, would require a family earning \$500,000 to contribute \$1,500 (.3% of their income). It's worth noting that the Ways and Means surcharge would affect only the top 1.2% of earners.

Very few small businesses would be affected by a surcharge on the wealthy. Furthermore, some wealthy partners in large law firms and investors with Wall Street investment partnerships are considered small businesses. Most Americans do not consider these small businesses and they are certainly not "mom and pop" operations. The Ways and Means surcharge would affect only 4.1% of small businesses. On the other hand, H.R. 3200 would benefit small businesses by implementing new rules on insurers that frequently refuse to insure or overcharge small businesses for health benefits. H.R. 3200 also grants small businesses an option to buy coverage in a more affordable public plan, subsidizes low-wage workers to get coverage and directly subsidizes some small employers for providing benefits.

Congress is at a critical point in debating health care reform. The path that leads to delay is unacceptable. We urge you to support a progressive income tax surcharge and press forward to help quickly pass this important health care reform legislation.

Sincerely,

American Federation of Government Employees  
American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations  
American Federation of Musicians  
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees

Communications Workers of America  
International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers  
International Brotherhood of Boilermakers  
Airline Pilots Association  
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers  
International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace and  
Agricultural Implement Workers of America  
Metal Trades Department, AFL-CIO  
Professional Employees Department, AFL-CIO  
Service Employees International Union  
United Steelworkers of America  
United Mineworkers of America