Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 3, 2010

The Honorable Harry Reid
Office of the Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid:

As the Senate continues to work on health reform legislation, we strongly urge you to consider including a public option.

Here are the reasons for this request:

1) The public option is overwhelmingly popular.

A December New York Times poll shows that, despite the attacks of recent months, the American public supports the public option 59% to 29%. And a recent Research 2000 poll found 82% of people who supported President Obama in 2008 and Scott Brown for Senate last week also support the public option. Only 32% of this key constituency is in favor of the current Senate bill – with more saying it "doesn't go far enough" rather than it "goes too far."

Support for health care legislation started to fall as popular provisions like the public option were stripped out and affordability standards were watered down. The American people want us to fight for them and against special interests like the insurance industry, and it is our responsibility to show them that their voices are being heard.

2) The public option will save billions for taxpayers, speaking to the fiscally-responsible sensibilities of our constituents.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates that the public option will save taxpayers anywhere from $25 billion to $110 billion and will save billions more when private insurers compete to bring down premium costs. The stronger the public option, the more money it saves.

By including the public option, we can simultaneously reduce tax increases and the deficit. This is a common-sense way to temper the frustration of Americans who question whether Congress is spending their money wisely and fighting for the middle class.

3) There is strong support in the Senate for a popular public option.

It is very likely that the public option could have passed the Senate, if brought up under majority-vote "budget reconciliation" rules. While there were valid reasons stated for not using reconciliation before, especially given that some important provisions of health care

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reform wouldn't qualify under the reconciliation rules, those reasons no longer exist. The public option would clearly qualify as budget-related under reconciliation, and with the majority support it has garnered in the Senate, it should be included in any healthcare reform legislation that moves under reconciliation.

As Democrats forge "the path forward" on health care, we believe that passing the public option through reconciliation should be part of that path. We urge you to favorably consider our request to include a public option in the reconciliation process.

Sincerely,

Jared Polis
Member of Congress

Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress

Keith Ellison
Member of Congress

Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress

Sam Farr
Member of Congress

Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

Paul Tonko
Member of Congress

Janice D. Schakowsky
Member of Congress

Donna M. Christensen
Member of Congress

Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress

John J. Hall
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Michael F. Doyle
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David Wu
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Anthony D. Weiner
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Alcee L. Hastings
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Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress

Tammy Baldwin
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John Conyers, Jr.
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Gwen Moore
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Robert A. Brady
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Bob Filner
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Peter Welch
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Chaka Fattah
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Eleanor Holmes Norton
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Jerrold Nadler
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Lynn C. Woolsey
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Alan Grayson
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John Garamendi
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John W. Olver
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James P. Moran
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Corrine Brown
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Lloyd Doggett
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Grace F. Napolitano
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Laura Richardson
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Barbara Lee
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Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
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Diane E. Watson
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Judy Chu
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