

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 31, 2009

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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

The Honorable John Boehner
Republican Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Republican Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John M. Spratt, Jr.
Chairman
Committee on the Budget
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kent Conrad
Chairman
Committee on the Budget
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Ranking Republican Member
Committee on the Budget
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Judd Gregg
Ranking Republican Member
Committee on the Budget
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Distinguished Colleagues:

First and foremost, we applaud the continued bipartisan commitment to ensuring access to affordable, quality and portable health care for every American. Our health care system needs reform and we believe we can accomplish the required reform this year. Our nation expects us to solve this challenge in an open, honest and bipartisan manner. Working together, we can accomplish the reform American families need and deserve.

It is essential that we work together across party lines. It is important for us to reject partisan tactics and move forward on this important challenge in a comprehensive, inclusive and bipartisan manner. The White House Health Care Reform Forum was an important step in moving this dialogue forward, and we want to continue building on that spirit of cooperation and bipartisanship.

Any successful health care reform proposal must be subject to the full scrutiny of both parties of the Senate and House of Representatives, and the American people. Using the budget reconciliation process, in the Senate for example, would limit debate to only 20 hours and restrict the ability of Senators to amend and perfect a proposal that is intended to steer one-sixth of our economy in a new direction. This would make it

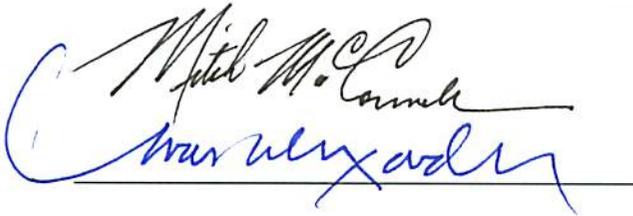
difficult, if not impossible, to gain broad bipartisan support for effort. It would be a tremendous disservice to the American people and our nation.

We applaud our colleagues on the Senate Budget Committee for their wisdom in rejecting the inclusion of health care reconciliation instructions. Unfortunately the House Budget Committee's proposal does include such instructions. It is our understanding that the instructions will simply serve as a placeholder to push the Senate during its conference with the House. This is not only unwise, it violates the principle of bipartisanship to which President Obama and Congressional leaders have publicly committed. It also violates the spirit of the recent White House Health Care Reform Forum.

The expedited reconciliation process would severely limit the deliberation and consideration of ideas from both sides of the aisle on substantive legislation. The American people deserve an open and vigorous dialogue on the important national priority of health care reform. We request your commitment to reject reconciliation instructions in the final budget package.

We urge you to take a united stand against allowing this issue of national importance to be led down a partisan path. Let us collectively pledge our support for an open, honest and dignified process. The American public deserves no less.

Sincerely,


Mitch McConnell


Orrin Hatch

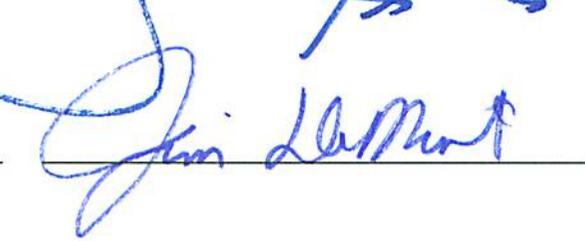

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Mike Crapo


John Ensign


Paul


R. Bennett


Jim DeMint

Letter to the Leadership

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