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September 3, 2009

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States of America
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, D.C.

Dear President Obama:

Thank you for continuing to work with Members of Congress to draft a health reform bill that will provide the real health care reform this country needs.

We look forward to meeting with you regarding retaining a robust public option in any final health reform bill and request that that meeting take place as soon as possible.

Public opinion polls continue to show that a majority of Americans want the choice of a robust public plan and we stand in solidarity with them. We continue to support the robust public option that was reported out of the Committees on Ways and Means and Education and Labor and will not vote for a weakened bill on the House Floor or returning from a Conference with the Senate.

Any bill that does not provide, at a minimum, a public option built on the Medicare provider system and with reimbursement based on Medicare rates-not negotiated rates-is unacceptable. A plan with negotiated rates would ensure higher costs for the public plan, and would do nothing to achieve the goal of providing choice and competition to keep rates down. The public plan with set rates saves \$75 billion, which could be lost if rates are negotiated with providers. Further, this public option must be available immediately and must not be contingent upon any trigger.

Mr. President, the need for reform is urgent. Every day, 14,000 Americans lose their health care coverage. We must have health care reform that will effectively bring down costs and significantly expand access. A health reform bill without a robust public option will not achieve the health reform this country so desperately needs. We cannot vote for anything less.

We look forward to meeting with you to discuss the importance of your support for a robust public plan, which we encourage you to reiterate in your address to the Joint Session of Congress on Wednesday.

Sincerely,


Lynn C. Woolsey
Co-Chair


Raúl Grijalva
Co-Chair