



January 7, 2010

President Barack Obama
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Speaker Nancy Pelosi
The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Majority Leader Harry Reid
The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. President, Speaker Pelosi, and Majority Leader Reid,

American Indians and Alaska Natives understand more than most Americans about the necessity of health care reform in our country. We strongly support the efforts made by the House of Representatives and the Senate to deliver a health reform bill to the President's desk that will benefit the lives of millions of Americans.

The National Congress of American Indians, the National Indian Health Board, and the National Council of Urban Indian Health thank and acknowledge the Administration and Congressional Leadership for their commitment to Indian Country during this process. The explicit effort to include our Indian health care delivery system throughout the health reform legislation will ensure that our health system will be modernized, strengthened, and preserved. In addition, the inclusion of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act, in both of the Senate and House brings to fruition a decade-long effort to modernize and reauthorize Indian Country's health care system.

From the beginning of the health care reform of the process, tribal leaders have identified fundamental, key components that must be in place in any health reform legislation. Without them, the Indian health system would be severely damaged, and the rights of Indian people and our sovereign governments would be jeopardized. These key provisions include:

1. Exemption of American Indians and Alaska Natives from Individual Penalties and Cost Sharing
2. Indian Health Provider Protections
3. Exclusion of Health Benefits as Income
4. Indian Health Care Improvement Act Reauthorization

While all of these provisions have been secured – to some degree – in both the House and Senate passed bills, there are significant differences in the language. To address these discrepancies, we have offered our recommendations to staff. We look forward to working together to ensure that the language needed to protect our Indian health care delivery system is in place and that any and all newly-authorized programs to increase access and delivery of health care will include tribally operated Indian health programs.

Thank you for your leadership in protecting, advancing, and preserving tribal sovereignty. You have our full support in working to secure a health care reform law that enhances and elevates the health care delivery system for *all Americans*.

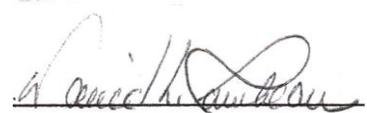
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Reno".

Reno Keoni Franklin
Chairman
NIIHB

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jefferson Keel".

Jefferson Keel
President
NCAI

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Rambeau".

David Rambeau
President
NCUIH