

MARTIN HEINRICH
1ST DISTRICT, NEW MEXICO

1505 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-6316

20 FIRST PLAZA, NW, SUITE 603
ALBUQUERQUE, NM 87102
(505) 346-6781

HEINRICH.HOUSE.GOV



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON STRATEGIC FORCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

COMMITTEE ON
NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
ENERGY AND MINERAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
NATIONAL PARKS AND PUBLIC LANDS

October 14, 2009

Hon. Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. Capitol, H-232
Washington, D.C. 20515

Hon. Steny Hoyer
Majority Leader
U.S. Capitol, H-107
Washington, D.C. 20515

Hon. George Miller
Chair, Committee on Education and Labor
2181 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader Hoyer, and Chairman Miller:

As Congress prepares to consider health care reform, I ask that we remember our promises to Indian Country and include reauthorization of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (IHCIA) as part of comprehensive reform.

Our country desperately needs health care reform—but our pursuit of reform cannot leave Native Americans behind. As Democrats, we have long promised that IHCIA would be reauthorized on our watch. I represent tens of thousands of Native Americans in Central New Mexico, and my Native constituents have made clear to me that they cannot wait any longer for health care reform in Indian Country.

Comprehensive health care reform must include Indian health care reform, and the first step in that reform is reauthorizing IHCIA. Although there are many reforms and modernizations that must be made to the Indian Health Service (IHS), stakeholders have negotiated a streamlined reauthorization that makes only the seven most urgent changes to IHS. This reauthorization, included in the Rahall amendments to H.R. 3200, is the critical foundation for building a high quality health care system for Native Americans.

When President Obama addressed a joint session of Congress last month, he said, “In the United States of America, no one should go broke because they get sick.” This applies no less to Native Americans than any other American. Unfortunately, federal neglect of IHS means that many Indians cannot afford even the most basic health care. If we leave Indian health out of health care reform, we will have failed yet again to keep our promises to Indian Country. Please ensure that IHCIA reauthorization is included in comprehensive health care reform legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. Heinrich'.

Martin Heinrich
Member of Congress

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