



October 21, 2009

The Honorable Harry Reid
Democratic Leader
522 Hart Senate Office Bldg
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Transparency in the Healthcare Debate

Dear Senator Reid,

As you work to merge the Health, Education, Labor & Pensions Committee health bill with the Senate Finance Committee version, **we write to urge you to ensure that taxpayers are finally treated with the respect they deserve and are provided with the accountability and transparency Congressional leadership and the Administration have promised.**

Taxpayers, who ultimately pick up the tab for every bill Congress passes, deserve greater accountability than they have recently been provided with. From the way the “stimulus” package was passed to the way healthcare negotiations are currently being led behind closed doors – taxpayers deserve better, especially from a Senate Leader who once pledged: *“No longer can we allow special interests and lawmakers to conspire behind closed doors. We need transparency.”*

The attempt to pass the ten-year “doc fix” bill without spending cut offset was yet another attempt to obfuscate the real cost of the healthcare overhaul you and your colleagues are seeking. But the time for shenanigans is over.

On behalf of taxpayers, we urge you to make the full text of the merged health bill along with the final CBO score for this merged version available for public review at your earliest convenience, and for a minimum of five full consecutive days (excluding weekends and holidays) in a searchable form before moving the bill further.

Given the impact federal legislation has on all American taxpayers, a preliminary score of the health bill would simply not be good enough. Congress should take its time to weigh all its decisions carefully, while seeking more input from the public, who should be given the opportunity to partake in political discourse.

Taxpayers feel this way, too: A recent Rasmussen poll shows that 83 percent of Americans want bills posted online in final form before Congress votes on them. Of these, 64 percent favor a two-week period, not just the 72 hours that are currently being floated.

It is time for this “most honest, most open, and most ethical Congress,” as your House colleague Nancy Pelosi once called it, to live up to its accountability promises.

Grover Norquist
President
Americans for Tax Reform

Sandra Fabry
Executive Director
Center for Fiscal Accountability

cc: All members of the U.S. Senate

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