

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-7012

September 11, 2009

The Honorable Jim Gibbons  
Governor of Nevada  
One Hundred North Carson Street  
Carson City, Nevada 89701

Dear Governor Gibbons:

Thanks for your September 11th letter on health insurance reform. I agree with you that comprehensive health reform is a top priority of President Obama and the 111th Congress. I further agree with you that this reform should lower health care costs while increasing the insured population, the quality of care, and accessibility for all Nevadans.

I hope that you will also agree that the importance of health reform for Nevadans could not be greater and the costs of inaction are simply unacceptable. Between 1997 and 2006, health insurance premiums for the average Nevada family nearly doubled, growing from \$5,031 to \$9,746. Without action on this critical issue, insurance premiums are projected to grow to \$18,879 by 2016. Too many Nevadans live in fear of losing their insurance while at the same time pay a hidden tax of \$1,300 to cover the costs of providing health services to the uninsured. Today, 220 Nevadans lost their health insurance and this alarming number will continue each day until comprehensive health insurance reform is enacted.

The picture is just as troubling for Nevada and its economy. Because uninsured Nevadans live shorter lives and are less healthy, our state's economic output is dramatically reduced. Some estimates put this figure as high as \$2.7 billion this year alone.

Let me assure you that I am aware of the potential fiscal impact of this legislation on Nevada and its taxpayers. Medicaid is a responsibility shared by the federal and state government. That is why when it came time to put together the economic recovery legislation Congress passed earlier this year, I fought to ensure that Nevada received a higher increase in the federal medical assistance percentage than any other state. As for your comments on Medicare, I believe seniors and taxpayers deserve the highest quality care for their dollar. That is why I am determined to battle for Nevadans even if it means taking on the big insurance companies.

I agree with you that it is essential that Congress takes the time to examine all outcomes to this critical problem in order to find sustainable, long term solutions. That is precisely what we are doing. As you may know, hearings on health insurance reform began last Congress. Since those early efforts, at least five Senate committees have conducted numerous hearings and the story is similar on the House side. In addition, I have consulted extensively with health care

consumers, physicians, nurses, hospital administrators, patient advocates, businesses large and small alike, seniors, and many others.

As a result of these actions, I believe we are closer than ever to passing comprehensive legislation. After extensive opportunities for committee members from both political parties to participate, three House committees and one Senate committee have reported out legislation and the Senate Finance Committee is poised to do the same later this month.

I am confident we will pass a bill this year that will lower insurance costs, improve access and improve quality for all Nevadans, end insurance company discrimination, and improve Medicare. I also believe we will be able to do this in a fiscally responsible and sustainable manner.

I am committed to working with your administration and anyone else in Nevada who shares these goals. I understand my staff has been available to discuss our efforts to date. My staff remains available to you should you have any additional concerns or ideas as we move forward on this much-needed reform.

My best wishes to you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Harry Reid". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "H".

HARRY REID  
United States Senator  
Nevada