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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1201

November 20, 2009

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
FINANCIAL SERVICES
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RURAL DEVELOPMENT, BIOTECHNOLOGY,
SPECIALTY CROPS, AND FOREIGN AGRICULTURE

President Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC

Senator Harry Reid, Majority Leader
United States Senate
Hart Senate Office Building, SH-522
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Byron Dorgan
Chairman
Senate Committee on Indian Affairs
838 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear President Obama, Majority Leader Reid, and Chairman Dorgan:

I respectfully urge that you include provisions reauthorizing the Indian Health Care Improvement Act in the final version of the Senate health care reform bill as well as any health care reform legislation that is signed into law. Recently, H.R. 2708, The Indian Health Care Improvement Act, was included in the final version of The Affordable Health Care for America Act, which passed the House of Representatives on November 7, 2009.

The Indian Health Care Improvement Act is vitally important to the nearly 2 million American Indians and Alaska Natives who depend on the Indian Health Service for medical care. Reauthorization of the IHCA will begin to bridge the health gap for Indian Country by authorizing funding for the recruitment and retention of Indian health professionals through scholarships, extern programs, continuing education programs, and retention bonuses. It would make permanent, current temporary programs for diabetes, and require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to provide for mammography and other cancer screening consistent with updated national standards.

Additionally, this legislation would authorize the Secretary to establish an Indian youth program for the purpose of providing innovative mental and physical disease prevention programs. Funding would also be authorized for activities such as assisted living, hospice care, long-term health care, home and community-based services, and traditional healing practices.

Permanent reauthorization of the IHCA is critical to ensure that authorities are in place to bring Indian health care into the 21st century and to reduce health disparities in Indian Country. I thank you for your attention and look forward to working with you to improve access and quality of care for Indian Country.

Sincerely,



Walt Minnick
Member of Congress

CC: Speaker Nancy Pelosi

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