



January 6, 2010

By Fax

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Durbin
Assistant Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid and Assistant Majority Leader Durbin:

The purpose of this letter is to express our concern on behalf of veterans, military members and their families with the Senate version and the House version of national health care reform. We are writing to you to urge you to protect TRICARE and VA Health Care programs because of your interest in veterans' affairs and broad experience in national defense.

We are alarmed there is no language in either of the bills that would expressly protect VA health care or TRICARE and fulfill President Obama's promise last August 2009 that neither program would "be affected by our efforts at broader healthcare reform." Section 311, of the House bill HR 3962, does not protect VA Health Care or TRICARE Programs.

In addition, unless there is specific language excluding TRICARE, TRICARE for Life, and VA health care programs from a proposed excise tax, veterans and military retirees face the very real prospect of paying a new tax on so-called "Cadillac" health care plans.

VA and TRICARE healthcare programs are earned benefits – earned through sacrifice and service and enacted by Congress that understands that tacking care of veterans and military retirees is a cost of defending our nation. Changing these benefits unintended or intended not only breaks a promise made to those who served in the Uniformed Services, it would threaten the viability of the all-volunteer force because it breaks faith with those who serve our country.

Many other sectors of our nation have specific and significant concerns as well. Small business worries about the impact of the expensive mandates on their survival and the economy as a whole. Seniors have great anxiety with the \$500 billion Medicare cut, which also directly affects many veterans who have Medicare themselves or whose spouses are covered through it. There are other worries that the impact of extensive penalties, taxes and fees in the bill will ultimately be borne by the nation's citizens who use the health system. We are also concerned that these provisions will impose additional unintended costs on veterans, active and reserve military, and our communities.

During the conference process, we strongly urge you to immediately seek an amendment to the bill and add language to make it clear that nothing in the act interferes with the Department of Veterans' Affairs or Department of Defense's existing authorities and that VA health care programs and the TRICARE and TRICARE of Life programs are excluded from any taxes, or unintended consequences.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Williams Coane". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

C. Williams Coane
RADM, USN (Ret)
Executive Director



January 6, 2010

By Fax

The Honorable Max Baucus
Chairman, Senate Finance Comm.
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Grassley
Ranking Member, Senate Finance
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Baucus and Ranking Member Grassley:

The purpose of this letter is to express our concern on behalf of veterans, military members and their families with the Senate version and the House version of national health care reform. We are writing to you to urge to protect TRICARE and VA Health Care programs because of your interest in veterans' affairs and broad experience in national defense.

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C. Williams Coane
RADM, USN (Ret)
Executive Director



January 6, 2010

By Fax

The Honorable Carl Levin
Chairman, Senate Armed Services Comm.
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John McCain
Ranking Member, Senate Armed Services
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Levin and Ranking Member McCain:

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