



December 22, 2009

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid and Minority Leader McConnell:

The Association of the United States Navy (AUSN) represents our nation's finest Sailors - active, reservists, retirees, and their families. The purpose of this letter is to express concern on behalf of veterans with the Senate version and the House version of national health care reform. We are writing to you because of your interest in veterans' affairs and broad experience in national defense.

We are alarmed there is no language in the bills that would expressly protect VA health care or TRICARE and fulfill President Obama's promise last August that neither program would 'be affected by our efforts at broader healthcare reform.'

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 members.

We 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".

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



December 22, 2009

The Honorable Max Baucus, Chairman
Senate Committee on Finance
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Grassley, Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Finance
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Baucus and Ranking Member Grassley:

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