



United States
Virgin Islands



Guam



Commonwealth of
Puerto Rico

January 7, 2010

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
S-221 Capitol Building
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510-7362

Dear Leader Reid:

The Christmas Eve Senate vote to pass comprehensive healthcare legislation was an historic step in the long struggle to ensure that all Americans have a right to affordable and quality healthcare. As you and other Senate leaders work with House leaders to reconcile the House and Senate bills in the coming weeks, on behalf of the people of Guam, Puerto Rico and the United States Virgin Islands, we respectfully request your support for the principle that “all Americans” include the 4.4 million U.S. citizens residing in the U.S. Territories.

In this respect, we strongly urge your support for the provisions in the House bill relating to Medicaid funding for the Territories and the eligibility of our citizens to participate in the health insurance exchange(s). As you know, the House bill provides \$10.35 billion over nine years for Puerto Rico and the other U.S. Territories to expand our severely restricted Medicaid programs. The House bill also provides \$4 billion for the Territories to assist uninsured individuals earning above the low insular Medicaid income thresholds but less than 133 percent of the federal poverty level in purchasing private insurance on the new health insurance exchange(s) established by the bill. While together these provisions still do not guarantee equal treatment with the States, they will provide an important pathway to parity in the long-term, as well as essential funding for immediately needed improvements in our underfunded healthcare systems.

The Senate bill, on the other hand, makes only modest improvements in the current Medicaid programs for the Territories, while excluding Territorial residents from participating in the health insurance exchange(s). These exclusions, and the limited assistance provided in the Senate bill, would further increase the fiscal burdens on our respective governments, while

leaving our citizens severely disadvantaged in comparison with our fellow Americans on the mainland.

The unfair disparities in federal healthcare policy can and should be significantly reduced by adopting the House language in any final healthcare bill. Such a choice would represent an important step forward in fulfilling the President's commitment to provide equal treatment for the Territories and to ensure that quality healthcare is available to all Americans, regardless of where they reside.

Very truly yours,



John P. de Jongh, Jr.
Governor of the U.S. Virgin Islands



Felix Camacho
Governor of Guam



Luis G. Fortuño
Governor