

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-7012

November 2, 2009

Dear Colleague:

Thank you for your recent letter on health care reform. I agree with you about the importance of ensuring that the Senate debate health care reform in an open and transparent way, and assure you that the process for considering this critical legislation will continue to meet that standard.

As you know, both the HELP and Finance Committees conducted lengthy public markups at which Republican and Democratic Senators offered numerous amendments and proposals by members of both parties were approved. This legislation has been fully available on the Internet for many weeks.

As you also know, we are now working to take these publicly-available provisions and meld them together into a single bill. Apart from my decision to include a public option from which states may opt out, no final decisions have been made – and none can be made until we get more information about how CBO would score different combinations. In other words, there is no bill to release publicly – it does not exist.

Once we receive the necessary information from CBO, we can begin to make decisions about what to include in a merged bill. I assure you that I will make the legislation available to the full Senate and the American people prior to its consideration. There will be ample opportunity to examine and evaluate its provisions. Furthermore, if we are able to overcome your opposition to permitting the Senate to even debate this important legislation, all members will have the opportunity to offer amendments. I have no intention of rushing this process or blocking Senators from offering alternatives.

While the two health care reform plans that are serving as the main building blocks for the merged bill have been publicly available for quite some time, I would note that the Republican Leadership's health care plan remains a secret, unless perhaps it does not exist.

Needless to say, I fully understand if your plan is still under development, and would not presume to suggest that you publicly share draft legislative text for even an individual element of your plan, let alone an entire bill, before it is finalized.

However, as soon as a comprehensive Republican alternative is complete, I hope you will be willing to immediately make it public. I am sure you agree that the American people deserve the opportunity to fully review both parties' health reform plans before we begin this important debate.

Sincerely,


HARRY REID
Senate Majority Leader

CC: Attached List

Senator Alexander
Senator Barrasso
Senator Bennett
Senator Bond
Senator Brownback
Senator Bunning
Senator Burr
Senator Chambliss
Senator Coburn
Senator Cochran
Senator Collins
Senator Corker
Senator Crapo
Senator DeMint
Senator Ensign
Senator Enzi
Senator Graham
Senator Grassley
Senator Gregg
Senator Hatch
Senator Hutchison
Senator Inhofe
Senator Isakson
Senator Johanns
Senator Kyl
Senator LeMieux
Senator Lugar
Senator McCain
Senator McConnell
Senator Murkowski
Senator Risch
Senator Roberts
Senator Sessions
Senator Shelby
Senator Snowe
Senator Thune
Senator Vitter
Senator Voinovich
Senator Wicker