



The National Organization of Portuguese-Americans
Action Alert
January 15, 2010

Dear Friends of NOPA,

To better inform and empower our community, we will begin to send you NOPA's Action Alerts. To maximize the purpose and value of the alerts, please send us your comments and what types of issues you would like to see included. All comments and suggestions can be sent to info@nopa-us.org, or you can call NOPA's Executive Director, Francisco Semião, at 703-389-3512.

Thank you.

Urgent: Contact Your Senators TODAY!
Support Immigrant Families' Access to Health Care

Dear Friends of NOPA,

Recent media reports and immigrant advocacy organizations have reported that members of Congress are willing to accept a final health care reform bill that lacks addressing key challenges of some immigrant families. As a part of NOPA's mission to empower the Portuguese Americans, we feel that it is important to give our community the opportunity to be heard on Capitol Hill.

If you support this issue, please weigh in today with your members of Congress to ensure that a final health care reform bill reflects the needs and concerns of the immigrant community. Decisions are being made about the contents of a final health reform bill at this very moment.

In particular, there is a key provision that may interest you and needs your attention:

The Five-Year Bar. Under both the House and Senate health care reform plans, legal immigrants are required to have health insurance but must wait five years before they can access insurance programs such as Medicaid. There have also been amendments offered to institute a 5 year ban on legal immigrants from participating in the health insurance exchange that the reform bills would establish. Fortunately, these amendments failed, but we must continue to urge our elected officials fight for immigrant equity and allow all legal immigrants to participate in the exchange. We would also hope that you can express your dissatisfaction with the current law 5 year ban on legal immigrants from participating in Medicaid and CHIP (Note: some states do allow legal immigrant children and pregnant



women to participate without waiting the 5 years).

You can make a difference. Go to this link <http://www.usa.gov/Contact/Elected.shtml> to send a letter to your members of Congress and the White House right now and tell them what meaningful health care reform looks like to you. NOPA highly encourages that you personalize this letter and share your stories. For your convenience, a sample letter has been provided after the signature that can be used in your letter.

Sincerely,

Francisco Semião
Executive Director

Sample Letter

Dear _____,

I am writing to ask that you stand for a health care reform bill that works for all communities. During the consideration of final legislation, please weigh in to urge a sensible approach to health care reform. The benefits of reform should be accessible to all Americans, including immigrants, but there are several core areas that must still be addressed. In particular, I request that the final bill adopt the House approach to allow everyone access to the new health insurance Exchange. The House bill has ensured that our nation's workers and families do not face excessive barriers to getting the coverage they need through the Exchange.

I ask that you take steps to cease the needless punishment of legal immigrants. Legal immigrants will be required to have health insurance but may not be able to access programs such as Medicaid due to a five-year waiting period for public coverage programs. Please support equal access to affordable health coverage for legal immigrants. Senate amendment 2991-a measure that was not voted on-would give states an option to remove a harsh five-year waiting period for Medicaid for legal immigrant adults. I ask that you join the members of Congress who support the equitable treatment of legal immigrants in health care reform legislation.

Ultimately, health care reform that works for America must work for all communities, including mine. Please make every effort to make these changes in a final health care reform bill.

Sincerely,

Your Name



Look Up and Contact Your Senator

To look up and contact your US Senator, please visit the following link and copy and paste your letter onto the appropriate field:

http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm