

SAMPLE HEALTHCARE REFORM LETTER

Below is a sample letter that neurosurgeons can use to write to the Senators, Representative and President Obama. It is merely an outline to get you started and you are highly encouraged to tailor this to your own practice and add personal information to make it more compelling.

Print the letter on your office or personal letterhead. The format for the inside address is as follows:

The Honorable [Insert first and last name]
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable [Insert first and last name]
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Barack H. Obama
The President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Senator [insert last name]/Representative [insert last name]/Mr. President:

I am a practicing neurosurgeon in [insert city and state] and I am writing to express my views about healthcare reform.

I certainly agree that reform of our nation's healthcare system is long overdue and I am pleased to see that Congress is inching closer to passing reform legislation. I think everyone can agree that all Americans should have a wide range of choices for affordable health insurance coverage and Congress needs to address problems such as insurance portability by eliminating coverage denials for pre-existing conditions. However, based on what I am hearing, I am very concerned that current reform efforts go well beyond what is necessary to fix what is broken with our system. Rather than pursuing a carefully targeted set of reforms, it appears to me that the bills under consideration by Congress will significantly expand the role of the federal government in all aspects of healthcare, to the detriment of physicians and patients alike.

As you continue to debate the details of healthcare reform legislation, I encourage you to consider the following:

- Congress must protect the sacred relationship between patients and their physicians by adopting reforms that will eliminate insurance company interference and by decreasing, not increasing, the presence of the government in the patient exam and operating rooms. I fundamentally oppose ideas such as an Independent Medicare Commission, which would take Medicare policy decisions out of Congress and place them in the hands of unelected officials with little accountability for the healthcare decisions it makes. This kind of structure is an opportunity for a few individuals to implement sweeping changes to the Medicare program, which is unacceptable.
- A public health insurance option is simply unnecessary to ensure that individuals have adequate choice of health plans. There is no question that the inclusion of the public

health insurance option will lead to more and more people being covered by this government run plan. As some commentators have suggested, the public option is the entire camel under the tent toward a single-payer, government run healthcare system, which would allow the government to set benefits and implement rules that could restrict patients' choice of physician and limit timely access to quality care.

- It isn't healthcare reform, if proven medical liability reform is not part of the package. Easing the crushing weight of medical liability by adopting reforms such as those in place in California and Texas will help curb defensive medicine and bring down healthcare costs.
- Patients should have direct access to, and choice of, specialists without having to go through a gatekeeper or jump through too many hoops. Direct access to specialty care equals quality care and health care savings, and delivery system approaches like the medical home are simply another managed care model that American's long ago rejected. Such choice can be achieved if Congress allows patients to privately contract with their physicians.
- Efforts to promote quality improvement are laudable, but the determination of quality medical care and best practices must be made by the profession of medicine, not by the government. Congress should reject proposals that would penalize doctors who do not participate in Medicare's physician quality reporting initiative, which in my view does nothing to measure or improve the quality of care that I provide to my patients.
- Seniors' timely access to care is jeopardized unless Congress prevents the looming 22% physician payment cut by repealing Medicare's sustainable growth rate (SGR) formula and I urge you to reject any short-term "patches" to prevent these cuts. We need to be rid of the SGR altogether!
- Congress should refrain from financing increased payments for primary care by across-the-board cuts to all other physicians. While primary care is certainly important to the foundation of the health care system, we still need a robust specialty care workforce. Not every disease is preventable; people will still have accidents and develop conditions that require specialty care treatment. After all, "**it is brain surgery**" and Congress must make sure that we have enough doctors of all specialties available well into the future.

These are a few of the critical issues that I am worried about as you move forward with landmark legislation that may well change what I believe to be the best healthcare system in the world. I therefore hope you proceed cautiously so we do not completely dismantle the system that we have in place today.

Thank you for considering my views. I am happy to speak directly with you or your staff about these and other healthcare issues at your convenience.

Sincerely,

[insert your name]