



National Family Farm Coalition

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Nov. 6, 2009

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House of Representatives
Office of the Speaker
H-232, US Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Madam Speaker:

As an organization that works closely with farmers, fishermen and rural communities, we urge you to vote for passage of H.R. 3962 – America's Affordable Health Choices Act – as it makes it way to the floor of the House of Representatives this weekend.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, putting seafood on our plates is the Number 1 most dangerous job in the country and putting food from the land on our plates is Number 6. This means that farmers, fishermen and ranchers bravely put their health, bodies and lives on the line to ensure that the rest of us have food to eat, but these small businessmen and -women often have no health insurance to cover their on-the-job injuries, much less commonplace illnesses. Being self-employed also means that their entire livelihood is on the line if a life-threatening accident or illness takes hold of them. We often learn about farming and fishing families going into financial trouble – even bankruptcy – because a family member was struck with cancer or other life-threatening illness.

As businesses that rely on our natural resources, obtaining health insurance means having to work harder on the land or water to pay skyrocketing health care premiums and costs. These costs increase overhead, which in turn means farmers and fishermen have to harvest more and more to make sure they make ends meet. This is a double-edged sword, as these activities equate to not only more pressure on natural resources, but also to more possibilities of accidents and injuries.

Therefore, common sense tells us to ensure that farmers and fishermen – including farm and fish workers – have access to health care coverage. We believe the provisions in H.R. 3962 cover these vulnerable populations who desperately need access to affordable health care.

As small businesses, farmers and fishermen are among the other small business owners who will pay nearly \$2.4 trillion over the next 10 years to provide health insurance for their families and employees. H.R. 3962 provisions such as short-term relief in the form of a high-risk pool to commence immediately in 2010 and the requirement that health care plans spend at least 85 percent of premium dollars on medical care will be of great benefit to small businesses, especially self-employed farmers and fishermen.

We know more work is ahead and we look forward to working with you and other members of Congress to ensure that health care reform is passed this year. Those of us who put food on our collective tables cannot live without it.

Sincerely,

Katherine Ozer, Executive Director

NFFC unites and strengthens the voices and actions of its diverse grassroots members to demand viable livelihoods for family farmers, safe and healthy food for everyone, and economically and environmentally sound rural communities.

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