



SAMPLE Letters to the Editor

Examples from a variety of people, addressing different issues and concerns

Focuses on Republican ideas in president's proposal (179 words)

The problems with the American health care system are undeniable. The current system has failed too many people I know: my neighbor, whose out-of-pocket health care costs left him bankrupt after an emergency; the hair salon down the street that stopped offering coverage to employees when their insurer increased rates by 35 percent; my sister, who lost her job and couldn't afford coverage on her own.

That's why I've been surprised by some of the debates in Washington surrounding health care reform. The comprehensive health care reform proposal will make the changes the American people desperately need by drawing on ideas from both Democrats and Republicans. The plan helps small businesses insure employees by offering generous tax credits. It gives individuals more bargaining power by pooling them together in Exchanges, and it creates new rules to hold the insurance industry accountable and block excessive premium hikes, pre-existing condition exclusions and other common industry practices.

I ask [Sen. X and X and Rep. X] to vote for the comprehensive health care reform America needs. The time for change is now.

Insurance industry needs to be reformed (185 words)

I've followed the debate around health care reform for a year now, but I can't sit by and watch any longer. The time for comprehensive reform is now – no more bickering. This is it.

Egregious abuses by insurance companies must stop; the American people deserve to be treated fairly. The 39 percent rate hikes by Anthem Blue Cross in California were not an isolated event. People around the country are paying much more than they can afford for insurance that does much less than it should. Insurers strip coverage from hard-working families when they reach their lifetime caps, or they deny coverage altogether based on health status and pre-existing conditions.

The health care reform proposal will stop these insurance abuses. It will require insurers to spend more money on medical benefits instead of CEO salaries. It protects families from unreasonable rate hikes, and it prohibits insurers from denying treatments because of someone's pre-existing conditions.

America cannot wait any longer for this comprehensive reform. Now is the time. I ask [Sen. X and X and Rep. X] to support their constituents by supporting health care reform.

Thanking a health care reform champion (158 words)

I want to applaud [Sen. X and/or Rep. X] for taking the right vote and continuing to move health care reform toward the president's desk. The bill will insure 31 million Americans who can't afford it now, will offer small businesses real relief so they can provide their employees with health coverage, and will make the insurance industry play by some rules instead of profiting on the backs of sick people. This bill is an urgently needed answer to the questions so many of us ask ourselves after we tuck the kids in, or on the way to work: What if I get sick? What happens to my daughters if I lose my job?

During this past year of debate on health care reform, [Sen. X and/or Rep X] stood up for all of us who have ever asked those questions, and [her/his] support is proof that people do go to Washington to help the people back home.

Focus on help for small businesses (178 words)

President Obama's health care reform proposal offers much-needed tax credits to small businesses that work to provide health insurance to their employees, and it proves that the president understands such businesses are the backbone of our economy and communities.

I run [Balanced Yoga Studio in Fredericksburg], and even though the studio's mission is all about being healthy and staying well, I had to change health plans last year to one that offers skimpier benefits and little preventive care. It didn't save me any money, but premiums on the old plan went up and I couldn't afford to keep the coverage.

I am lucky to have understanding employees who know these are trying times, and I feel blessed to have a president who understands the really tough decisions that small business owners make all the time. Passing this bill would make a lot of those choices easier, right away. I urge Congress to get health care reform done. This is it. In every small business in every town in this country, there are people waiting for you to act.

From an insured person who supports reform (243 words)

I am one of the lucky people in our country who have good insurance that gives me access to the health care I need at a price I can afford. I know I am no more deserving than my neighbor; I want everyone in my community and my country to have access to quality health care.

I want the elderly couple at my church to be able to afford all of their medications. I want the single mother who works at my grocery store to have peace of mind knowing that, if she gets sick or her son needs his shots, they can go to the doctor. I want the small businesses up and down Main Street to be able to keep their doors open, secure in the knowledge that they can afford insurance for their families and their employees that provides real benefits. And, I want the same for my cousin across the country, who was born with a heart defect and has been denied

insurance. Access to quality health care should not be predicated on your income, your health status or where you live .

Republicans say we cannot afford health care reform. But we are paying the cost for a broken system now, and that expense will only increase the longer they delay. I am asking [Sen. X and X and Rep. X] to lead our country out of this health care system quagmire. Pass comprehensive health care reform now.

From a self-insured person in medical debt (213 words)

The health care summit was a great opportunity to let each party have its say, but I didn't have to be convinced that we can't wait on health care reform. I'm a pastry chef, and eighteen months ago I changed jobs. The [café in Richmond] where I work doesn't offer insurance. But being covered is important to me, so I bought an individual policy with a high deductible – I didn't feel like I had a choice. When I found out I needed surgery several months later, my fears were realized: the price of the procedure all fell to me.

I worked my way through school so I didn't have to take on student debt, but now I am paying off steep credit card bills and had to make major changes to cut my day-to-day expenses just to keep afloat. My dreams of saving for a house are pushed years down the road – and that's if I stay healthy. Health care reform would create rules and credits to make individual insurance plans like mine affordable. I ask [Sen. X and X and Rep. X] to finish the job they've begun and pass comprehensive health insurance reform like what the president proposes. A bill like that would mean real change in real lives like mine.

From a doctor with insured patients who can't afford care (188 words)

As a physician, I know that what's on the line with national health care reform is much more than elections – it's millions of American lives. Focusing on policy that helps people rather than politics is just what this doctor ordered.

Too often, I've had patients forgo treatments or taking medication because they simply could no longer afford it. These patients are hardworking individuals who have paid for health insurance all their lives. But when they finally needed it – when they suffered injuries or a family member fell ill – they found their insurance plan did not cover nearly enough.

A piecemeal approach won't cure these problems. We need comprehensive health care reform now, so insured individuals aren't bankrupted by overwhelming out-of-pocket expenses or lifetime caps, and so insurance companies are held accountable for promoting patient care rather than profits. The summit between President Obama and Members of Congress makes me hopeful our leaders will keep reform alive, so I can do the same for my patients.

I ask [Sen. X and X, and Rep X] to do the right thing and pass the health care reform America sorely needs.

From a state advocate (200 words)

As a consumer advocate, I have spent [X] years making sure real people have a voice in the health care debate, and the president's proposal goes a long way to expand coverage, curb rising health care costs and regulate insurance companies.

I was pleased to hear the president and congressional Democrats make the case for comprehensive reform. The problems America faces are complex, and a "baby steps" approach is simply not going to make the changes we need.

Based on my experiences working in [STATE] and those of my colleagues across the country, I know that nothing in the president's proposal is radical. Many states have adopted similar policies, which have the potential to help millions of people.

I also know that without careful consideration of how policies will impact real people, they can be harmful. That is why I am concerned by the proposals suggested by the Republicans. They don't solve the basic problems with our health care system, but they instead loosen the standards and restrictions necessary to protect consumers.

I know how far we've come. We can't wait any longer. I am asking [Sen. X and X and Rep. X] to pass comprehensive health care reform now.

From small business owner (205 words)

As the owner of [Henry's Fine Foods] in [Salt Lake City], I struggle to offer health insurance to my [15] employees. Many of them are just out of college or have young families and work for me because I offer health insurance. But each year premiums have risen, benefits have been trimmed, and I don't have any breathing room to absorb the extra costs.

Passing health reform is absolutely critical to the success of [Henry's] and the other shops that make our neighborhood what it is. Runaway health care costs and insurers who don't answer to anyone make it harder for businesses like mine to climb out of the recession and stay afloat.

The legislation Congress is considering now would take away that burden by providing tax credits to small business owners, allowing me to keep offering good health care to my employees and stay in the black without sacrificing growth. We need our elected officials to do more to make health insurance affordable to [Utahans] and help our small businesses. I urge Senators [Hatch and Udall] and Rep. [Matheson] to do what's right for their constituents and get a bill to the President. My employees and my business don't have any time to lose.

From nurse practitioner (195 words)

As a nurse at [Waukesha Community Health Services], everyday I see people who need and deserve quality health care, but go without. The reasons are many: their employer doesn't offer it, they can't afford to pay, or an insurer has denied them coverage because of something out of their control – having had a C-section or Hay fever can make someone ineligible for insurance.

Health care reform will end these unfair practices and help people get health care no matter where they work. And it will improve the way we deliver care, by investing in community health centers like [WCHS] and primary care, and by rewarding better care instead of just more.

When I was growing up I wanted to be a nurse to care for people. Now that I am, I see that it takes so many more people than just me – in fact, it takes a system, but ours is broken in many places. We need a comprehensive health care reform bill to fix that system, and help me and others provide better care for the people in our communities. Congress cannot delay – our elected officials must take the right vote for [Waukesha] and pass comprehensive health care reform.

For progressives (253 words)

As a consumer advocate in [STATE], I have followed the health care reform debate over the last year closely. While questions swirl about whether reform will happen this year, I want to remind everyone how far we've come. In the past year, our government provided access to health care to four million more American children, expanded care provided by rural community health centers, and guaranteed that people who lose a job can keep COBRA coverage.

But millions are still left with care they can't afford, or policies that punish them for getting sick, leaving families and children without treatment and without options. The American people and Congress saw this. The Senate and House both passed comprehensive legislation that would provide stability and security to families, rein in insurers, and extend coverage to more than 30 million Americans.

We have come way too far to throw in the towel now. We all know someone who is sick and has been denied coverage, or works two jobs and still can't afford her child's prescriptions, or is facing medical bankruptcy. We cannot let them down now and put reform on the backburner, or say "next time around." Tens of thousands die each year because they do not have insurance. For them and many others, next time around is too late.

We need Sens. [NAME and NAME] and Rep. [NAME] to finish the good work they started: Stand up for families and pass comprehensive health care reform legislation now. It is why we sent you to Washington.

Arguments against breaking up bill (204 words)

Americans cannot wait any longer for health care reform. Following the Democrats' loss of a supermajority in the Senate, some have called for a watered down version of health care reform, saying the legislation should be broken into smaller bills or scaled back. Some have even said that reform can wait.

It can't. We need comprehensive reform that tackles the crucial issues, and we need it now.

Over the last decade, premiums grew 3.5 times faster than wages, eating up more of our families' paychecks. The legislation already passed both in chambers of Congress will finally make quality, affordable health care accessible to millions of Americans who cannot pay soaring premiums and out-of-pocket expenses, who have lost their jobs and their insurance, or whose staggering medical debt prevents them from getting the care they need.

This legislation will ensure a parent can find care for a sick child, a person with a pre-existing condition can get insurance, a senior can afford medication, and a small business owner can offer insurance to employees. Our country badly needs this reform – all of it. I urge Sens. [NAME and NAME] and Rep. [NAME] to do what's right for their constituents and get a bill to the President.

From someone with cancer (174 words)

When I was diagnosed with cancer last year, a thousand worries ran through my mind. But it wasn't until I was faced with my first bill for chemotherapy treatments that I realized my survival could hinge on my bank account.

For people with serious illnesses like me, national health care reform has been the beacon of hope that we will be able to get the care we need without going bankrupt from insurmountable medical debt. The legislation in Congress will keep insurers accountable so they can't drop people when they get sick or deny insurance to someone because of a pre-existing condition. It will put a limit on out-of-pocket costs, so we don't have to choose between buying necessary prescriptions and making mortgage payments.

People facing illness have a world of worry on our shoulders. On behalf of the many people like me who are fighting for our lives, I am asking Sens. [NAME and NAME] and Rep. [NAME] to fight to pass comprehensive health care reform legislation now. Our survival depends on it.

General (160 words)

In this highly-charged partisan climate, our Congressional leaders seem stuck, unsure of the best path forward. But let's remember that last year, both the House and Senate made the right move by passing comprehensive bills that would provide access to affordable, quality health care coverage to millions of American families—fixing the system so that it works for my grandchildren and their children. Right now, the health care system works for far too few people.

We've had multiple votes and plenty of time to discuss options over the past year. The best and only option to change the downward spiral of our current health care system is on the table. We must pass comprehensive reform now. All the pieces are there for our leaders. With the President's direction, it's time for them to put the puzzle together.

I urge Sens. [NAME and NAME] and Rep. [NAME] to do what's right for their constituents and get a bill to the President.