



February 24, 2010

The Honorable John A. Boehner
Minority Leader, United States House of Representatives.
1011 Longworth House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Minority Leader Boehner:

As fellow Catholics, we share an appreciation of the special meaning that the penitential season of Lent holds for all in our faith. Through our traditions of prayer and sacrifice, we are not only brought closer to God but also called to identify with the suffering of others – and particularly with the sacrifice that Jesus embraced to bring healing to humankind.

Because health and healing are at the heart of the Gospel message, and because our Church has advocated a right to universal health care so forcefully for nearly a century, we are asking today that you and all Catholic members of Congress follow the tradition of "giving up something for Lent": namely the divisive politics that has pitted groups of Americans against one another and jeopardized our shared Catholic commitment to achieve universal health care. We are urging all Catholic members of Congress to come together for the common good and to pass universal health-care reform legislation before Easter.

We believe Christ is calling all of us, as citizens of the most prosperous and powerful nation on earth, to bring an openness of mind – rooted in the Catholic tradition of applying both our faith and prudential reason to the moral challenges of our time – and a generosity of spirit to overcome the injustices and economic hardships of our health-care system. A litany of challenges lies before us that includes:

- Nearly 50 million people at any one time lack affordable, accessible health care;
- Half of all personal bankruptcies result from a family health emergency;
- Millions of others are trapped in their jobs – with an accompanying disallocation of labor in the marketplace – because they cannot risk loss of their health insurance;
- The US economy continues to lose competitive advantage in the global marketplace due to runaway health-care costs;
- Our health-care system is neither structured to improve patient outcomes nor control costs;
- Health-care insurers are seeking to raise rates (39% recently in California) as they jettison “bad risks” and earn record profits.

For too long now, fidelity to an ideology has become more important in politics than serving the needs of people – the fruit of public service that makes it such a noble endeavor. In the Ash Wednesday readings, St. Paul tells us “Working together, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For he says: *In an acceptable time I heard you and on the day of salvation I helped you.* Behold, now is a very acceptable time: behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor 6:1-3).

As Catholics, we know that Lent is an ideal time for our faith to remind us of who we are and of our baptismal responsibilities to ourselves and one another. And like the U.S. Marines, we know that faithful Americans don't leave anyone behind. Too often these days, the cost of ideological purity is leaving behind those most in need.

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We are urging you and your Catholic colleagues in Congress to provide leadership this Lent by "giving up" the disruptive politics that is paralyzing our democratic process – and hurting our people – so that our health-care system can be reformed for the common good. President Obama has proposed a comprehensive reform bill that combines elements of the House and Senate legislation, and which incorporates ideas from both Democrats and Republicans. The majority of Americans continue to support the goal of providing universal health-care coverage. As St. Paul would say, "Now is a very acceptable time."

In our shared faith, and as leaders of an organization advancing the Catholic Social Tradition in the public square with 15,000 supporters across our country, we thank you for your prayerful deliberation in helping solve this critical Catholic social priority.

Sincerely yours,



Patrick Whelan MD PhD
President



Steven A. Krueger
National Director

cc: The President

The Honorable Harry Reid, Senate Majority Leader

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Senate Minority Leader