

Congress of the United States  
Washington, DC 20515

November 9, 2001

**Americans Overwhelmingly Support Helping Unemployed Workers Keep  
Health Coverage During Economic Downturn**

Dear Colleague:

We are writing to draw your attention to Americans' views on how best to assist working families during the current economic downturn.

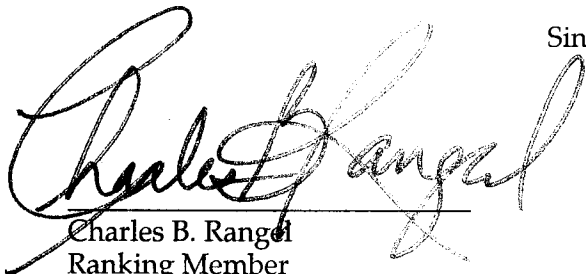
A recent survey by Lake Snell Perry & Associates shows that at least 90% of Americans, whether Republican or Democrat, support government efforts to provide health insurance assistance for the newly unemployed. In a poll conducted this October, 94% of Democrats, 93% of Independents, and 90% of Republicans "strongly or somewhat support" helping laid off workers keep health coverage until they find a new job.

The House Republican leadership, however, has chosen to ignore not only the health care needs of the newly unemployed, but the views of the overwhelming majority of all Americans as well. The so-called "economic stimulus" package, passed on October 24 by the thinnest of margins, helps special interests at the expense of the newly unemployed. The package would give more money to just four companies – IBM, General Electric, TXU (Texas Utilities), and ChevronTexaco – than the \$3 billion it sets aside for health care assistance for unemployed Americans.

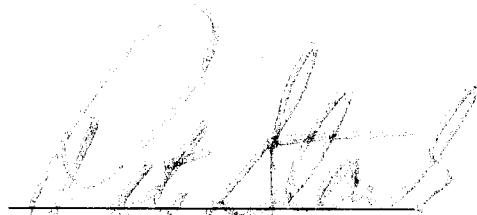
We can, and we should, do more. The House Democratic stimulus package that was offered on the floor would have provided both a 75% subsidy of COBRA premiums and temporary health insurance coverage through Medicaid to help individuals and families who are not eligible for COBRA. This approach would come much closer to meeting the needs of the newly unemployed and the expectations of the vast majority of Americans. As the House and Senate move forward on an economic stimulus package, we urge you to keep in mind the public's strong support of health insurance assistance for the newly unemployed.

If you have any questions on this issue, please call Cybele Bjorklund (Ways and Means Minority, x54021), Bridgett Taylor (Energy & Commerce Minority, x53641), or Michele Varnhagen (Education and the Workforce Minority, x53725).

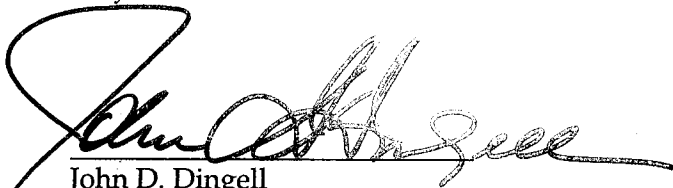
Sincerely,



Charles B. Rangel  
Ranking Member  
Ways and Means Committee




Pete Stark  
Ranking Member  
Ways and Means Health Subcommittee



John D. Dingell  
Ranking Member  
Energy & Commerce Committee



Sherrod Brown  
Ranking Member  
Energy & Commerce Health  
Subcommittee



George Miller  
Ranking Member  
Education and the Workforce Committee



Robert Andrews  
Ranking Member  
Education and the Workforce Employer-  
Employee Relations Subcommittee