

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 16, 2011

The Vice President
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Vice President,


As you continue to lead the Administration's negotiations over federal funding for critical government services for the remainder of this fiscal year, we wanted to offer our support in rejecting the ideological, divisive riders passed by the House of Representatives which serve only a purely political agenda. We all believe that our federal budget should be a tool to speed up the economic recovery, not a vehicle to score partisan points.

As you know, H.R. 1 was loaded up with over one hundred extraneous riders which constitute an ideological wish list and have no place in a serious budget. For example, a provision that completely prohibits Planned Parenthood from receiving any federal funding would do nothing to create jobs or tackle the deficit – it would instead effectively shut down health centers that serve three million women each year and provide nearly one million lifesaving screenings for cervical cancer, more than 830,000 breast exams and nearly four million tests and treatments for sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.

This ideological agenda cloaked in a budget document isn't even good fiscal policy – as you know, preventative care saves taxpayers dollars in the long run and studies indicate that every dollar invested ends up saving \$3.74 of health-related costs to federal and state governments. As a matter of creating jobs and bolstering the economy, this rider would have the opposite effect: not only will health centers be forced to close but many uninsured women and their families also may go without care, become more ill, and be kept away from their jobs. More fundamentally, without the care Planned Parenthood provides - without access to Pap smears, pelvic exams and breast exams - women will die. That is not just a fiscal matter. That is a matter of conscience, and a question of who we are as Americans.

We thank you for your leadership in these negotiations, and we stand ready to help in any way to defeat ideological riders that threaten our economic recovery today and America's long term strength

Sincerely,





Frank R. Lautenberg

Chuck Sch

Dianne Feinstein

Sheldon Brown

Jeanne Shaheen

Jamil K. Spaka

Rebba Stabenow

Ron Wyden

Bar Sanders

Bill O'Leary

Patrick Leahy

Kirsten E. Hillibrand

Jeffrey A. Merkley

Mark Begich

Carl Levin

Robert Menendez

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Barbara Mikulski

My Caucus