

# Health Rights Organizing Project

---

January 12, 2010

The Honorable Harry Reid  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
522 Hart Senate Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Harkin  
Chairman  
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions  
428 Dirksen Senate Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Christopher Dodd  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Children and Families (HELP)  
428 Dirksen Senate Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Max Baucus  
Chairman  
Committee on Finance  
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable George Miller  
Chairman  
Committee on Education and Labor  
2181 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-232, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steny Hoyer  
Majority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-107, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Henry Waxman  
Chairman  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
2125 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Rangel  
Chairman  
Committee on Ways and Means  
1102 Longworth House Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader Reid, Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader Hoyer, and Chairmen Harkin, Baucus, Dodd, Waxman, Rangel and Miller:

We represent grassroots organizations dedicated to health care for all and individual leaders in Native communities around the country that are dedicated to ensuring access to quality, affordable health care for every person living in the United States. We are writing to you today regarding the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (IHCIA), which has not been reauthorized since 1992, despite the United States' responsibility for the health care of Native people.

*The Health Rights Organizing Project is a collaboration of grassroots community organizations around the country. The project is co-coordinated by:  
Northwest Federation of Community Organizations - [www.nwfco.org](http://www.nwfco.org)  
Center for Community Change - [www.communitychange.org](http://www.communitychange.org)*

# Health Rights Organizing Project

---

Indian people suffer some of the worst health outcomes of any group in the country. The Indian Health Service is chronically underfunded, inadequately staffed, and out-of-date. Patients must often travel great distances to facilities and wait hours upon hours to be seen. Native people have extremely high rates of uninsurance, and when they do make it into the clinic or hospital they often receive substandard care and biased treatment.

The United States' debt for Native people's health is long past due. Since 1992, the health care system of the United States has evolved. The American health care system benefits from increased emphasis on wellness and prevention and expanded in-home services. Facilities have been modernized. Yet services and facilities for Indian people have not been similarly updated, and this abysmal situation contributes to shocking health disparities. Reauthorization of IHCA is a necessary step toward bringing health care for Native people into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and promoting equity in health.

Our country is stronger and healthier when we all get the health care we need. We are very pleased that Congress is poised to take action on Native health this year, with IHCA reauthorization included in both the House and Senate health care reform bills. Although both versions of IHCA reauthorization would represent an improvement over the current situation, the House version goes much further to advance the changes needed to fulfill the United States' obligations to Native people. The undersigned organizations and leaders urge you to ensure that the final health care reform bill include the House version as the foundation for IHCA reauthorization, with additional Senate provisions as outlined in the attached charts prepared by the National Indian Health Board.

Furthermore, we are pleased that Congress is moving toward increasing funding for community clinics. It is extremely important that urban Indian health organizations, the only source of care for many Native people, be eligible for this increased funding. To accomplish this, the final health care reform bill must use the Senate language, which includes FQHCs and not only Community Health Centers. If only CHCs are covered, urban Indian health organizations will be excluded from the support they desperately need.

The United States has waited far too long to meet its health care obligations to Native people. These Native health measures will represent a historic step in the right direction.

Sincerely,

[Arizona Advocacy Network](#)  
Association for American Indian  
Development  
California Immigrant Policy  
California Partnership

CASA de Maryland  
Center for Community Change  
[Citizen Action of New York](#)  
[Citizen Action/Illinois](#)

*The Health Rights Organizing Project is a collaboration of grassroots community organizations around the country. The project is co-coordinated by:  
Northwest Federation of Community Organizations - [www.nwfco.org](http://www.nwfco.org)  
Center for Community Change - [www.communitychange.org](http://www.communitychange.org)*

# Health Rights Organizing Project

---

Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of  
LA

[Colorado Progressive Action](#)

[Connecticut Citizen Action Group](#)

Faith Action for Community Equity

[Florida Consumer Action Network](#)

[Georgia Rural Urban Summit](#)

Granite State Organizing Project

Grassroots Organizing

[Health Access CA](#)

Health Rights Organizing Project

Idaho Community Action Network

Indian's People Action

[Iowa Citizen Action Network](#)

ISALAH

Korean Resource Center

[Maine People's Alliance](#) / [MaineAlliance](#)

[Dirigo](#)

Make the Road NY

[Michigan Citizen Action](#)

Michigan Gamaliel

[Missouri Progressive Vote Coalition](#)

Montanans for Health Care

[NDPeople.Org](#)

Nebraska Appleseed

Nebraska Urban Indian Health Coalition

[New Hampshire Citizens Alliance](#)

[New Jersey Citizen Action](#)

New York Immigration Coalition

North Carolina Fair Share

National Korean American Services &  
Education Consortium

Northeast Action

Northwest Federation of Community  
Organizations

[Ocean State Action](#)

[Oregon Action](#)

Ohio Gamaliel

Organization of the Northeast

[Penn Action](#)

Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada

[Progressive Maryland](#)

[ProgressOhio](#)

South Carolina Fair Share

South Dakotans for Health Care Solutions

Southwest Organizing Project

Sunflower Community Action

[Take Action Minnesota](#)

Tenants and Workers United

[Tennessee Citizen Action](#)

United Action Connecticut

[United Vision for Idaho](#)

[Vermont PIRG](#)

[Virginia Organizing Project](#)

[Washington Community Action Network](#)

[West Virginia Citizen Action Group](#)

Western South Dakota Native American  
Organizing Project

[Wisconsin Citizen Action](#)

*The Health Rights Organizing Project is a collaboration of grassroots community organizations  
around the country. The project is co-coordinated by:*

*Northwest Federation of Community Organizations - [www.nwfco.org](http://www.nwfco.org)*

*Center for Community Change - [www.communitychange.org](http://www.communitychange.org)*