

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 9, 2009

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

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

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader Hoyer:

As New Democrats, we would like to thank you for your diligence in pushing forcefully for the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, a bill that is essential to bringing relief to our economy and hardworking families across the country who are facing extremely difficult challenges. We also applaud the inclusion of many longtime New Dem priorities such as health information technology (IT), broadband investment, and funding for the Innovation Agenda. These investments will go a long way to stimulating our economy now while keeping America competitive in the future.

While we are happy with the overall structure of H.R. 1 as reported by the House, there are several provisions that we believe have been improved upon in the Senate, or which deserve special attention during a conference or other informal negotiations.

Broadband infrastructure. The New Democrat Coalition believes strongly that investment in our nation's broadband infrastructure is critical to continued economic growth and global competitiveness, and we thank you for including \$6 billion for this goal in H.R. 1. We were pleased to see the Senate has moved to increase funding from this level. We strongly support additional funding to bring broadband to more American families and businesses and improve the quality of service in currently underserved areas. We also favor the Senate's language in that it funnels the money through a single agency, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, rather than splitting funding between NTIA and the Rural Utilities Service. Having a single source administer the program will reduce confusion among broadband providers and streamline grant delivery.

Smart grid technology. In regards to the development of smart grid technology, we support the House action to ensure that any available technology protocol and standards would be eligible for funded projects. We believe Congress should not pick winners and losers, but should allow for the competition that drives innovation and the development of improved technologies. Therefore, we were pleased the Markey amendment was accepted on the House floor by voice vote, and we hope its language will be retained.

Comparative effectiveness research. The \$1.1 billion included in H.R. 1 for comparative effectiveness research is a crucial step towards a health care system that promotes and rewards

quality and value. We strongly support efforts to increase research capacity to learn what works in health care, but we believe it is critically important to structure comparative effectiveness research in ways that address the needs of individual patients. We believe the great promise of comparative effectiveness lies in its potential to create efficiencies and cut down on unnecessary spending in health care, but we strongly support bill and report language that protects against the use of this research to deny access to care solely based on cost. As we move towards final passage of this legislation, we urge you to ensure that clinical effectiveness and medical outcomes are the focus of comparative effectiveness research funding.

Globalization and TAA. As a coalition we are strong supporters of fair trade with our friends and allies around the world. Therefore, we applaud President Obama's strong stance in opposition to protectionism. While the economic recovery package must be focused on creating American jobs, the United States should avoid sending a protectionist message to our global trading partners and risk retaliatory measures that could undermine the American economy even further. Toward that end, we were pleased to see the Senate adjust its version of the bill and we urge further action in order to avoid a counterproductive outcome for American workers and businesses.

Additionally, while trade creates millions of American jobs, there are instances when trade has negative effects. As longtime supporters of expanding and improving the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program, we strongly support the Baucus-Grassley amendment, a bipartisan compromise crafted in concert with Ways and Means Chairman Rangel and Ranking Member Camp. By authorizing the TAA program through 2010 and modernizing benefits to be more flexible and accessible, the package would provide much-needed help to workers and companies affected by globalization during the current economic crisis and beyond. For the sake of our businesses and workers striving to compete in this global economy, we hope to see a robust investment in TAA included in the final economic recovery package.

Again, we thank you for your commitment to helping speed relief to our constituents and to America's ongoing competitiveness. We appreciate your consideration of our concerns.

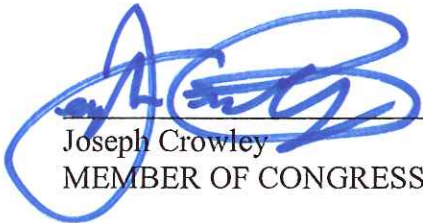
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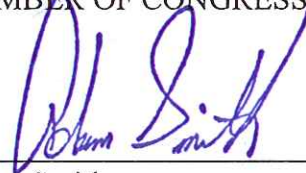
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