



National Farmers Union lists what rural Americans need in healthcare reform bill

By Agri-Pulse Staff

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Washington, Jan. 6 – National Farmers Union (NFU) President Roger Johnson submitted a letter Wednesday to Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi outlining four provisions for the health care bill which NFU believes require immediate attention.

“Quality, affordable health care coverage is a moral imperative – a human right – and we must act now,” Johnson insists. “NFU stands ready to work with Congress throughout the conference process to ensure passage of a final bill that begins to reform the current costly and inadequate health care system.”

NFU calls for including the following provisions as the bill moves through the legislative process to resolve differences between the separate healthcare reform bills passed by the House and Senate:

- A publicly-run health insurance option to dramatically increase the availability of healthcare to rural Americans and provide competition in underpopulated areas which have been historically dominated by very few private insurers.
- An end to the exemption from antitrust laws currently granted to health insurance companies, to ensure that consumers have the choices provided by a robust, competitive marketplace.
- The ability of self-employed individuals to deduct their health care costs as a business expense before calculating their self-employment tax, similar to how employees pay payroll taxes after their health care costs are deducted from their paycheck.
- Additional financial help for low- and middle-income families, so that rural Americans, who pay more out-of-pocket health care costs than their urban counterparts, can afford the insurance coverage they need.

“I look forward to working with Congress on addressing the issues outlined by NFU, and the numerous challenges and opportunities facing rural America.” Johnson said.

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