

American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations



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Statement by AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka on Senate Health Care Bill

November 19, 2009

We commend Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid for bringing forward a health care bill that moves us closer to the historic goal of health care for America – high quality, affordable health care for all in our rich nation. The Senate leadership bill takes the strongest steps yet to bring down costs. But the bill is not perfect. It retains a version of the excise tax from the Senate Finance Committee bill. We continue to believe that a tax on working families' benefits is the wrong way to finance health care and we will work hard to eliminate this provision as the bill heads to the floor.

The bill's inclusion of a public insurance plan option to hold private insurance companies accountable is a tremendous step. And the legislation should be praised for its other fair financing plans, including an increase in the Medicare tax on the wealthiest and an employer responsibility requirement, which we believe should be expanded to include more employers. The bill would expand access by covering 94 percent of Americans and reduce the deficit by \$130 billion over 10 years. Today another hurdle is cleared and we are optimistic that good, affordable care for working families will soon be law.

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