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December 1, 2009

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the millions of members and supporters of the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare, I am writing to express our opposition to the amendment offered by Senator McCain which would recommit H.R. 3590, the *Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act*, to the Senate Finance Committee with instructions to remove important Medicare provisions.

Much of the rhetoric from opponents of health care reform is intended to frighten our nation's seniors by persuading them that Medicare will be cut and their benefits reduced so that they too will oppose this legislation. The fact is that H.R. 3590, the *Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act*, does not cut Medicare benefits; rather it includes provisions to ensure that seniors receive high-quality care and the best value for our Medicare dollars. This legislation makes important improvements to Medicare which are intended to manage costs by improving the delivery of care and to eliminate wasteful spending.

The National Committee opposes any cuts to Medicare benefits. Protecting the Medicare program, along with Social Security, has been our key mission since our founding 25 years ago and remains our top priority today. In fact, these programs are critical lifelines to today's retirees, and we believe they will be even more important to future generations. But we also know that the cost of paying for seniors' health care keeps rising, even with Medicare paying a large portion of the bill. That is why we at the National Committee support savings in the Medicare program that will help lower costs. Wringing out fraud, waste and inefficiency in Medicare is critical for both the federal government and for every Medicare beneficiary.

The Senate bill attempts to *slow the rate of growth* in Medicare spending by two to three percent, or not quite \$500 billion, over the next 10 years. However, it is important to remember that the program will continue growing during this time. Medicare will be spending increasing amounts of money – and providers will be receiving increased reimbursements – on a per capita basis every one of those years, for a total of almost \$9 trillion over the entire decade. Even with the savings in the Senate bill, we will still be spending more money per beneficiary on Medicare in the coming decades, though not quite as much as we would be spending if the bill fails to pass.

America's seniors have a major stake in the health care reform debate as the skyrocketing costs of health care are especially challenging for those on fixed incomes. Not a single penny of the savings in the Senate bill will come out of the pockets of beneficiaries in the traditional Medicare program. The Medicare savings included in H.R. 3590, the *Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act*, will positively impact millions of Medicare beneficiaries by slowing the rate of increase in out-of-pocket costs and improving benefits; and it will extend the solvency of the Medicare Trust Fund by five years. To us, this is a win-win for seniors and the Medicare program.

The National Committee urges you to oppose the motion to recommit the bill to the Finance Committee with instructions to strike important Medicare provisions from health care reform legislation.

Cordially,

Barbara B. Kennelly
President & CEO