

Farm Bureau Urges ‘No’ Vote on Health Care Bill

WASHINGTON, D.C, March 19, 2010 -- The American Farm Bureau Federation is urging members of the House to “to stand with our nation’s agriculture producers” and vote “no” on the massive bill that will dramatically transform the nation’s health care system.

In a letter sent Thursday to all members of the House, AFBF President Bob Stallman said the legislation’s “negatives of new taxes, mandates, growth in government programs and overall cost far outweigh its benefits.” Stallman said Farm Bureau strongly favors health care reform, but it must be “workable, sustainable and balanced against the overall cost of doing business.”

Stallman told lawmakers that America’s agricultural producers are trapped in a broken insurance marketplace with few options and high insurance costs. “Farmers and ranchers need market-based reform that lowers costs and increases choices for private health insurance,” Stallman wrote.

“Health insurance costs are an ongoing and significant expense for farmers and ranchers who buy coverage for themselves and their families and the agricultural workers they employ,” Stallman emphasized. “The proposed framework for exchanges may help address costs and is similar in concept to association health plans which we have supported for years. Tax incentives in the proposal designed to help individuals and small employers afford health insurance costs are inadequate and temporary and their limited application will not adequately compensate employers for higher health care expenses.”

Pointing out that health care is primarily the responsibility of individuals, Stallman said Farm Bureau is opposed to government mandates that require individuals to purchase health insurance and for employers to provide it for their workers.

“Most farmers and ranchers are self-employed and buy health insurance for themselves and their workers through individual and small group markets,” Stallman said. “Passing a coverage mandate accompanied by a threat of penalty for noncompliance will only make the situation worse for people unable to afford coverage.”

Stallman told House members that Farm Bureau supports tort reform as a means to reduce health care costs. “Missing from health insurance reform legislation is meaningful liability reform that would inject fairness into the medical malpractice legal system and reduce unnecessary litigation and legal costs,” Stallman wrote.

The House is expected to vote on H.R. 4872, *the Health Care and Education Affordability Reconciliation Act of 2010*, on Sunday.