Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

January 5, 2010

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Madam Speaker,

We have read in various news outlets that you and your colleagues are meeting in secret with Senate Democrats and the White House to draft health care legislation. As the top Republicans on the Committees of jurisdiction, we hope you will strongly consider our request for an open, fully bipartisan negotiation process on this important issue.

House Republicans support bringing sunlight to the legislative process and allowing Americans to better understand the decisions that are being made that will directly impact their well-being. We couldn't agree more with President Obama when he called for a transparent negotiation process on health care reform legislation. Specifically, as a candidate for President, he said, "That's what I will do in bringing all parties together, not negotiating behind closed doors, but bringing all parties together, and broadcasting those negotiations on C-SPAN so that the American people can see what the choices are." We believe that this pledge should be upheld. That's why House Republicans have introduced a resolution that demands that these critical health care negotiations be conducted in the open. We urge you to keep the President's promise.

In addition, we strongly believe the final health care legislation should be posted online for at least 72 hours before it is brought to a vote, and that all Members should have that much time to review scores from the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) and Joint Committee on Taxation. This kind of transparency would help prevent the sweetheart deals so prominent in the Senate bill from being cut behind closed doors at the expense of the American taxpayer.

House Republicans have offered a health care reform plan that the CBO says will lower premiums by up to ten percent (saving more than $1,300 for a family who gets coverage through a small business). The House Republican bill is the only legislation considered by Congress that the CBO said would reduce premiums across the board. Some of the ideas that we believe are essential to any health reform bill include medical liability reform, allowing Americans to purchase health insurance across state lines and letting small businesses band together to purchase health coverage for their employees at a lower cost. Negotiating a final health care package behind closed doors will deny the public the chance to have their elected officials consider these ideas on their merits and to provide an explanation of their reasons for supporting or opposing them.

This bill is too important, affects too much of our economy and touches too many lives to be written in secret by a select few Democrats and lobbyists. We ask that you include Republicans in these negotiations, ensure that meetings about the health care bill are televised and open to the press, and provide the American people sufficient time to review the final bill and make their feelings known to their elected officials before it is considered for a final vote on the floor.

Sincerely,

DAVE CAMP
Ranking Member
Committee on
Ways and Means

JOHN KLINE
Ranking Member
Committee on
Education and Labor

JOE BARTON
Ranking Member
Committee on
Energy and Commerce