

Addendum: Per my March 23, 2010 conversation with Patience Wiggins in Congressman Connolly's office, the bill signed into law today by President Obama: 1) does *not* open up FEHBP to the general public; and 2) exempts everyone (to include Federal Employees) from paying the excise tax on high-value health insurance until 2018. I want to express my sincere appreciation to Congressman Connolly and his staff for helping to look after the interests of OPEDA members and Federal employees - and for keeping OPEDA informed of the developments and last minute changes to this legislation.

Louis Iacoletti,
President, OPEDA

January 25, 2010

Dear Mr. Iacoletti,

Thank you for contacting me with respect to health insurance reform and the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program (FEHBP). I share your belief that federal employees, like all Americans, should be able to keep the health insurance plan of their choice.

I was proud to vote for H.R. 3962, the Affordable Health Care for America Act. This legislation, which passed the House of Representatives on November 7th, would extend health insurance to millions of uninsured Americans, prohibit insurance companies from cancelling care when it is needed most and discriminating on the basis of preexisting conditions, close the Medicare donut hole, and reduce the rising cost of health care.

Fortunately, this bill does *not* open up FEHBP to the general public, or otherwise imperil health insurance for federal employees. In fact, the bill requires insurance plans to allow parents to keep children on the health care plans until children reach the age of 27, a proposal that the National Active and Retired Federal Employees (NARFE) had already proposed. In addition, this bill raises revenue without taxing health plans, unlike a proposal in the Senate that could have affected some FEHBP plans. When the Senate Finance Committee proposed establishing an excise tax on some health insurance plans, I wrote to Speaker Pelosi and described how such a proposal could impose taxes on many federal employees' health coverage. She was responsive to my concerns, and the House bill does not impose such a tax. I will continue to support health reform that protects the interests of federal employees.

Once again, thank you for expressing your concern on this very important issue. I appreciate hearing from you. For more information on my views on other issues, please feel free to visit my website at <http://connolly.house.gov>. I also encourage you to visit the website to sign up for my e-newsletter.

Sincerely,
Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress
11th District, Virginia