

WISCONSIN PROFESSIONAL POLICE ASSOCIATION

Law Enforcement Employee Relations Division • Supervisory Officers Relations Division • Civilian Employees Relations Division

January 12, 2010

The Honorable Herb Kohl
United States Senate
330 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Kohl:

I am writing on behalf of the Wisconsin Professional Police Association (WPPA) to express our concerns regarding the health care reform debate currently occurring in Washington, D.C. As you know, with over 11,000 members from more than 390 local association affiliates, the WPPA represents the vast majority of Wisconsin's law enforcement community. Our primary mission is to protect and promote public safety, as well as the interests of the dedicated men and women who serve to provide it. As Congress considers potential revenue sources for health care reform, we strongly urge you to reject the imposition of an excise tax on so-called "Cadillac" health insurance plans, as proposed in the Patient Protection and Affordable Health Care Act.

The health care plans of local public safety officers are not extravagant plans that are filled with superfluous medical benefits. They are good, comprehensive health benefits for which our membership has negotiated in good faith under Wisconsin's collective bargaining laws. While the legislation appears to recognize that the health care plans of public safety employees are more costly than the average health plan, the WPPA is extremely concerned that this tax would threaten the stability and security of these plans. As health care premiums continue to grow more quickly than inflation, the congressional Joint Committee on Taxation estimates that the proposed excise tax would hit over 40 percent of all plans – individual and family plans – in ten years. The WPPA believes that public safety plans would be among the first affected.

The excise tax does not discriminate between true "Cadillac" plans and the comprehensive health benefit plans that cover our nation's public safety officers because it is based on the total cost of the plan, regardless of what it covers or why it costs so much. The WPPA is concerned that local public safety employees will be forced to pay the excise tax in the form of wage cuts, higher premiums, increased out-of-pocket costs, and lower benefits. We believe that such an environment would have serious implications on our members' livelihoods, and by extension, the quality of public safety that Wisconsin's citizens deserve and have every right to expect.

America's Affordable Health Choices Act, as passed by the U.S. House of Representatives, includes a variety of sensible revenue sources to pay for health care reform. However, the inclusion of an excise tax on high cost health care plans would



The Honorable Herb Kohl
January 12, 2010
Page 2

have serious and detrimental consequences for hard working, middle-class Americans, many of whom serve Wisconsin's communities in a public safety capacity. The WPPA's membership has bargained to protect their health care benefits in exchange for negligible wage increases. They should not now be penalized for their good-faith efforts.

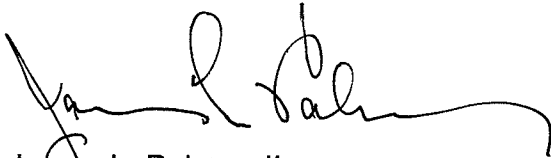
Wisconsin's public safety community confronts a dangerous task each and every day as it serves to keep us all safe. The reduction of health care benefits, in conjunction with a stagnant economy and the erosion of aid to local units of government, only serves to increase the challenges confronting our membership, as well as the families of those courageous enough to answer the call of duty. Please do not allow your health care reform efforts to risk jeopardizing the livelihoods of those who serve to keep Wisconsin as a safe place to live, work, and raise a family.

As Wisconsin's largest law enforcement group, we urge you to reject the proposed excise tax on high cost insurance plans as a revenue-enhancement, or, in the alternative, at least consider exempting high-risk professions from the tax and protect the benefits of those who serve to protect us.

Thank you.

Respectfully,

THE WISCONSIN PROFESSIONAL POLICE ASSOCIATION



James L. Palmer, II
Executive Director

JLP:jen