

## Governor Camacho Joins Territorial Leaders for Equality in Healthcare Reform Bill

Letter addresses the need to advocate equality in providing healthcare to all Americans

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Governor Felix P. Camacho sent a joint letter with the Governor of Puerto Rico Luis Fortuño, Governor of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Benigno R. Fitial and U.S. Virgin Islands Governor John P. deJongh, Jr., urging Majority Leader of the U.S. Senate Harry Reid (D-NV) to support quality healthcare for citizens residing in the U.S. territories as President Barack Obama's proposal does not adequately provide equal healthcare opportunities for the territories.

In the joint letter the governors wrote, "The President's proposal fails to reflect compromise provisions that the territories agreed to with the Administration, House and Senate negotiators earlier this year. It also fails to reflect the commitment made by the President-elect Obama to support a phase-in of equal treatment for the territories in federal healthcare policy..."

To further push for inclusion of the U.S. territories into the healthcare reform bill the Governors also asked Senator Reid to support the House provisions as discussions of the bill are underway.

"On behalf of our citizens, who freely risk their lives to defend our democracy but lack a vote to determine its policies, we strongly urge you to support the House provisions for the territories in any reconciliation or other legislative procedure used to implement comprehensive healthcare reform."

The House measure calls for \$10.35 billion over nine years to expand the heavily restricted Medicaid programs in the territories. The bill also includes \$4 billion for the Territories to assist the uninsured earning above the low insular Medicaid income thresholds. The House version contains provisions for Virgin Islanders, as well as for residents of American Samoa, Guahan, the Northern Mariana Islands, and Puerto Rico.

In addition to this effort, Governor Camacho and territorial leaders sent a joint letter to congressional and senate leaders last month asking them to consider the citizens of the U.S. territories in the Healthcare Reform Bill.