



June 5, 2007

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
Majority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate

The Honorable John Boehner
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Member:

Congress now has an opportunity to improve the quality of medical care, enhance convenience for patients, and literally save lives—all while helping to bring skyrocketing health care costs under control. This is why we are writing to urge the timely introduction and passage of health information technology (Health IT) legislation this year. By focusing on areas of bipartisan consensus, Congress can guide and accelerate the development of a nationwide interoperable health information system. Failure to act this year will likely delay action for two additional years, though private sector development will continue to accelerate. Without responsible federal guidance, the public interest in a nationwide interoperable system that serves all patients and meets our public health needs will be endangered.

We are a coalition of patients, practitioners and employers called **Health IT Now – Healthy Patients Through Health Technology** that have come together to build consensus across party, ideological and special interest lines. Our coalition is dedicated to bringing the benefits of Health IT to all Americans now.

This is possible only if Congress takes action this year. The health care market can realize the benefits of Health IT with a firm statutory and regulatory foundation in place. Legislation should include:

- Permanence in statute for a federal responsibility to lead a public-private process to establish standards for system interoperability, product certification, and quality measures and an accelerated process for standards improvement;
- Federal financial incentives to practitioners of care to facilitate the adoption of Health IT, and for communities, states, and other entities to plan Health IT components and develop Health Information Exchanges;
- Federal focus on consumer empowerment through patient education tools that encourage patient use of electronic health records and provider quality information: and

- Federal leadership of a federal-state process to resolve policy issues central to a secure and safe care system, like privacy and professional licensure

We believe the urgent need for legislative action can no longer be ignored. Congress has an opportunity to save lives and control health care costs through the use of Health IT, but only if Congress acts this year on these key consensus items.

We urge Congress not get bogged down by contentious and divisive issues and to move forward to realize the possibility of tremendous advances in the quality of patient care through technology. While our coalition is diverse, including patients, providers, employers and unions, we nonetheless are joining together to push Congress to act this year to pass the basics, and prepare for future challenges.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Nursing
American Homeowners Grassroots Alliance
American Society for Clinical Oncology
Consumers for Cable Choice
Genetic Alliance
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers
Latino Coalition
Marshfield Clinic
National Alliance for Caregiving
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association of Manufacturers
National Medical Association
National MS Society
National Patient Advocate Foundation
National Retail Federation
Research America
RetireSafe
Seniors Coalition
US Oncology
Verizon
Women Work!
World Institute on Disability