



REPRESENTING THE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY

*The Cornerstone of the Economy, Career Opportunities and Community Involvement*

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November 5, 2009

Dear Representative:

The National Restaurant Association strongly supports the broad objectives of the Affordable Health Care for America Act to lower costs and increase access to health care coverage. However, unless portions of the legislation are tailored to reflect the economic and operational realities facing our industry, we will be forced to oppose the bill.

The National Restaurant Association represents the nation's 945,000 restaurant and food service locations with a workforce of 13 million people, serving 133 million guests each day. We are an industry comprised mainly of small businesses with an average profit margin of less than 4 percent, and in the current economic environment total industry sales are down considerably over the last two years.

In considering the industry's composition and economic profile, the employer responsibilities written into H.R. 3962, the Affordable Health Care for America Act, represent a very significant challenge and burden on restaurateurs as it will threaten the viability of our industry and the millions of jobs we represent.

Over 90% of the restaurant industry is comprised of small businesses of 50 employees or fewer. Without a broader exemption for small businesses, as well as consideration for the overwhelming number of part-time employees we have, the bill would place unforeseen hardships on our industry.

The restaurant industry is a strong proponent of ERISA and is concerned about provisions in the bill that weaken the protections that enable some of our companies to provide uniform benefits to their employees in multiple states.

The National Restaurant Association agrees it is essential to take steps to rein in health care costs and expand coverage. We have been working to identify and encourage additional health care coverage options for those that we employ and are committed to covering more of the uninsured employed by the industry.

We ask that before legislation is finalized through conference, you consider the restaurant industry's economic profile and structure so that employers can truly offer—and employees can truly benefit from—the goals this reform seeks to achieve. We look forward to working constructively with you to reach that outcome.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dawn Sweeney".

Dawn Sweeney  
President & CEO  
National Restaurant Association