

April 13, 2006

Dr. Tom Ivey
123 XXX Avenue, NE
Aberdeen, SD 57401

Dear Tom:

Thank you for contacting me about the cost and availability of health insurance. I appreciate hearing from you.

Like you, I believe the high cost of health care and the growing number of uninsured are important issues facing South Dakota, as well as the entire nation. Unfortunately, there is no one-size-fits-all solution to this problem. Not all of the estimated 45 million uninsured individuals are chronically uninsured. Almost 50 percent of uninsured Americans work for small businesses or are family members of employees who work for small businesses.

The Health Insurance Marketplace Modernization and Affordability Act of 2005 (S.1955) was introduced in the United States Senate on November 2, 2005. This bill, if enacted, would establish association health plans (AHPs), which are group health plans sponsored by trade, industry, professional, chamber of commerce or similar business associations that meet federal certification requirements. By providing smaller businesses the same advantages currently enjoyed by larger companies, this group purchasing power helps small businesses purchase health insurance at an affordable price. This bill has been referred to the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee.

I believe that AHPs, if appropriately designed and implemented, are one proposed solution to the problem of the uninsured among many others, such as tax credits, medical savings accounts, and expanded flexibility for state and federal programs that provide health insurance. I will be sure to keep your concerns in mind as I work with my colleagues in the Senate to ensure that individuals have the opportunity to purchase quality affordable healthcare.

Thanks again for taking the time to contact me. Please keep in touch.

Kindest regards,

JOHN THUNE
United States Senator