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THE LEAGUE
OF WOMEN VOTERS
of New York State

July 6, 2009

Mary Wilson
President
League of Women Voters of the United States
1730 M Street NW, Suite 1000,
Washington, DC 20036-4508

Dear Ms. Wilson:

As I write this letter, Health Care Reform, and the issue of providing universal health care in the United States, is becoming an ever increasing political challenge for President Obama and for Congress. In this effort to ensure that every American has access to high quality health care, there is intense debate in Congress as to the type of legislation that will serve to answer this great societal need. As you know, the most recent efforts by the US Senate to formulate legislation on this politically sticky issue has yet to address two major questions: how to finance such reform and the concept of a public plan. As we read and hear the daily news, there is also passionate debate among our citizenry and state governments as to how to accomplish reform. True to the League's commitment to quality, affordable and accessible health care, the League of Women Voters of the US and its State League components have not been absent in this discussion at their respective national and state levels. From lobbying on such reform legislation such as employer mandates, Child Health Plus, bulk prescription drug purchasing etc, the LWVNYS has and continues to work effectively on these and other reform legislation through the lens of its health care position, which closely mirrors the LWVUS position.

At its biennial state Convention, the delegates directed the board to address a letter to the LWVUS, urging it to advocate for single payer health care system as one way of providing for quality, accessible, affordable universal health care.

While we appreciate the LWVUS position on universal health care, as reiterated in your June edition of the Leader's Update, we wish to urge you to consider renewed promotion of a public option that could now, or in the future, form the basis for a single payer health care system.

Recent polling indicates public support for this position, notwithstanding apparent lack of traction in certain segments of Congress. As David Brooks pointed out in his June 30, 2009 column in the *New York Times* Op Ed section, *Vince Lombardi Politics*, about the limits of legislative pragmatism:

There is legislative pragmatism — writing bills that can pass. Then there is policy pragmatism — creating programs that work. These two pragmatisms are in tension, and in their current frame of mind, Democrats often put the former before the latter.

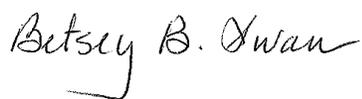
. . . . On health care, too, the complicated job of getting a bill that can pass is taking priority over the complicated task of creating a program that can work. Dozens of different ideas are being added, watered down or merged together in order to cobble together a majority. But will the logrolling produce a sustainable health system that controls costs and actually hangs together?

In lobbying pursuant to its health care position, the League must not fall into the trap of allowing legislative pragmatism blind it to policy pragmatism. To do so runs the risk of advocating for a program that jettison's one or more of the elements of *quality, affordability* and *accessibility* central to the League's health care position.

Moreover, as an organization widely respected for nonpartisan, rational positions on matters of public policy, we believe that the League should consider raising its voice to the public in support of policy pragmatism, perhaps by means of an op ed piece to the *New York Times*.

Thank you for your attention to this letter, and for your continued efforts on behalf of the League.

With great pride in the League,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Betsy B. Swan". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Betsy B. Swan
President, League of Women Voters of New York State