


Dear Mr. & Mrs. 

Thank you for contacting my office regarding the "Patients' Bill of Rights," Campaign Finance Reform. I appreciate you sharing your thoughts and concerns with me on these important issues.

H.R. 526, sponsored by Representatives Greg Ganske and Representatives John Dingell is known as the "Patient Protection Act of 2001." The goal of the legislation is to provide consumers' with access to information and to protect them from being denied access to medical care they may be entitled to receive. Among the many provisions of the bill: requires health plans and insurers to offer consumers more care options and greater access to patient information; restricts interference by health plans and insurers with the doctor-patient relationship; requires health plans and insurers to comply with patient protection requirements of the Act; and prohibits health plans and insurers from discriminating against a licensed health care professional with respect to participation. H.R. 526 has been referred to several committees of jurisdiction including Ways and Means, Energy and Commerce and Education and the Workforce.

While I would agree with the major premise of the ideas outlined above, I remain concerned about certain other provisions of H.R. 526. The legislation could potentially allow for employers, plan administrators, even human resource personnel to be sued for denying a claim. In Michigan, I fully supported our state's efforts at signing strong pro-consumer patient protection legislation into law. This legislation contained many of the same provisions described above in addition to making available third-party independent reviews of medical claims within 48 hours for emergencies. The reason this legislation passed with overwhelming support was because it kept the medical decisions in the hands of medical doctors without leading to costly, time consuming litigation. The best protection for consumers is access to affordable, quality health care. Holding employers and health plans liable will force employers to cut back or drop health care coverage altogether.

I anticipate Congress will take action on providing additional protections to patients. Rest assured that I will be a strong advocate for the men and women of Michigan's Eighth District.