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Prescriptions

Making Sense of the Health Care Debate

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Large Coalition of Religious Groups Urges Passage of Health Bill

By *LAURIE GOODSTEIN*

An unusually broad array of religious groups sent a letter to President Obama and members of Congress on Wednesday [calling on them to pass a comprehensive health care bill](#) [pdf].

The 58 national and 80 local groups signing the letter represent evangelicals, most mainline Protestant denominations, Roman Catholics, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Quakers and Mennonites. Some of the signatories are health care providers, and some work with low-income communities. Some are religious orders of Catholic sisters.

The letter says that while no reform bill will be perfect, “Turning back now could mean justice delayed for another generation and an unprecedented opportunity lost.”

The letter does not specifically endorse the president’s proposal or the House or Senate bills. But one of the coalitions that signed the letter, the [PICO National Network](#), which represents a thousand congregations across the country, has applauded the president’s plan, saying it would go further than the Senate plan to reduce out-of-pocket costs for low-income families.

The last-minute lobbying push caps a year in which religious groups that support a health care overhaul were drowned out by religious leaders who opposed it, often because of concern that it did not adequately restrict coverage of abortion.