

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Health care reform remains a top priority for the Obama Administration as well as the Democratic leadership in the Congress. The U.S. apple industry recognizes current health care problems associated with escalating costs. However, the industry is concerned that its unique needs and others in agriculture have not been fully taken into account. High turnover of workers, the seasonality of most agricultural jobs and the national security interests of producing our own food must be considered when writing such landmark legislation.

The U.S. apple industry worked in support of a small business exemption included in the Senate bill for companies with 50 or fewer employees. Seasonal workers – defined as working up to 120 days per year – were not counted toward the 50 worker threshold. The U.S. apple industry joins others in agriculture and business in calling for broader exemptions of seasonal workers.

The industry is also concerned about the potential impact of the legislation on the H-2A guest worker program.

USApple Position: *USApple opposes the House and Senate-passed health care legislation. The employer mandates, new taxes and fines included in both bills would put U.S. apple growers, packers, shippers and processors at a competitive disadvantage.*

USApple supports health care reform provisions, such as exemptions for seasonal workers, that recognize the unique needs of labor intensive agriculture including the high turnover of workers, and seasonality of many jobs.