

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 14, 2011

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker of the United States House of Representatives
United States Capitol, H-232
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Speaker:

We are writing to you today over a matter of utmost importance. It involves the Franking Commission's failure to approve Member communications in a credible and consistent way. This partisan, political application of current Franking guidelines has directly impeded our ability to share important, life-changing information with our constituents and represents a grave disservice to the American people.

Over the last several weeks, this Congress has been actively engaged in a fervent, often divisive debate over the future of the Medicare system. Given the magnitude of proposed changes, we have engaged in aggressive efforts to educate our constituents on the potential impact and have encouraged them to express their viewpoint on this issue. However, these efforts have recently been hindered by the failure of the Franking Commission (specifically the Republican staff) to approve mass communications in a timely and consistent manner.

We are still awaiting approval on informational mailers on Medicare that were submitted well within the customary approval timeline. Suggested revisions that we have received from the Republican staff are inconsistent with previous approvals and, in fact, disallow specific statements and language that have been approved in previous submissions.

Given this abrupt and inconsistent new interpretation of the established Franking Guidelines, we must surmise that there is a deliberate, strategic attempt to censor any Member communication that echoes the widespread public criticism of the Republican Plan for Medicare.

The documentation in question uses terminology and phrases that have been approved in previous documents. The rising lack of popularity of the House Republican Plan for Medicare hardly justifies the use of the Franking Commission to obstruct legitimate communication between Members and the Americans that we serve. This politically motivated censorship undermines our ability to execute one of our primary roles and diminishes the credibility of this institution. To that end, we ask, in the strongest possible terms, that you urge the Franking Commission to allow for "a robust debate in an open process that allows you to represent your constituents – to make your case, offer alternatives and to be heard," as you promised when you assumed the Speaker's Gavel in January of this year.

Sincerely,


Timothy H. Bishop
Member of Congress

 
Leonard L. Boswell
Member of Congress

Gerry E. Connolly
Member of Congress


Joe Courtney
Member of Congress


Ed Perlmutter
Member of Congress