

# Children's Health Care Bill



## *Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK)*

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*-- Senate Floor Statements - September 28, 2007*

I urge the President to support the CHIP bill to allow more American children access to the healthcare they need to stay healthy, to stay alert and to function well in school. The best investment we can make is in our children and by signing the CHIP bill, the President can grant our future generation of over 10 million children access to vital health care services.

*-- Press Release - September 27, 2007*

## Senate - September 28, 2007

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Madam President, the rising number of Americans without health insurance is a problem that is recognized by all Members of this body. There are some 46.6 million Americans today who are not receiving proper medical care.

Compounding the problem is the reality that, as my colleague from Oregon--Senator *Wyden*--likes to say, we do not have a health care system in this country; we have a sick care system.

As we look at the growing cost to our economy that health care represents, the number one thing we can do today to reduce that cost is preventative medicine--making sure that Americans can access health care today, so that they are not sick tomorrow.

The Children's Health Insurance Program is an important means to provide the most vulnerable of our population--our children--with health care. And we all know that when our children are sick, it is not just the child that is impacted but the parents as well; missing time at work to care for their child or catching the latest bug their child brings home from the daycare center. The social and economic impact of a sick child goes well beyond the need for cough syrup or a band-aid. And the impact is even greater in our Native communities.

Section 401 of the CHIP reauthorization bill provides \$10 million in grants for child health studies, including: preventative health care, treatment for chronic and acute conditions, and discovery of knowledge gaps within CHIP and child health. Studies such as these will help to narrow the gap in treatment disparities among native and non-White children, as well as to provide preventive health care services so our children stay healthy while reducing the expensive costs of sick care in America.

This is just one reason why it is important that programs such as CHIP continue their viability. If the President vetoes the bill as he said he would, the resulting straight reauthorization of CHIP at the current baseline assumption means that 800,000 children currently enrolled in CHIP would lose their coverage. But under the CHIP reauthorization bill, those children, plus 4 million more children would be able to access health care--preventive care.

We should not have to read about tragedies such as 12-year old Deamonte Driver from Maryland who died from a tooth abscess. Deamonte's life could have been saved by a routine \$80 tooth extraction but his family was booted from Medicaid and his mother couldn't afford to pay for Deamonte to receive the necessary dental care. Deamonte Driver died in February of this year.

This heartbreaking story is just one example of why the reauthorization of CHIP--at the Finance Committee passed levels--is so important. 800,000 more children should not be put in a similar position as Deamonte.

In addition, outreach programs will allow more children to be enrolled in the CHIP and Medicaid programs. This bill provides \$100 million in grants for outreach and reenrollment efforts--\$10 million will provide grants to Indian organizations to improve enrollment of Native Americans. Another \$10 million will be spent on a national outreach program and the remaining \$80 million will target rural areas with high rates of eligible but not enrolled children, racial and ethnic minorities and populations with cultural barriers to enrollment.

But CHIP is only one part of the health care struggle. As I noted before, some 46.6 million Americans are without health care insurance. In my State of Alaska, about one out of six people do not have health insurance. And the sad reality is that most of those without health insurance are employed. Only 1 in 10 of the uninsured in Alaska are unemployed people in the workforce.

For every family that is covered through an employer-based health care policy or is able to purchase their own health care insurance, fewer adults and children will rely on Medicaid and CHIP for their health care needs, and create less of a strain on Federal resources.

We know that preventive care is much more effective, both medically and economically, than caring for an illness. Likewise, providing our businesses with the ability to offer affordable health care insurance to their employees is a preventative means to lower the Federal Government's costs as mandatory spending for health care programs takes up a greater and greater portion of the Federal budget.

Until we reach the point where we in Congress can agree on how to address the future of our Nation's health care policies, however, programs like CHIP are needed to ensure that those who are most vulnerable are not left out.

I support this reauthorization bill as a temporary fix of a long standing problem, but we as a Congress must be willing to take a serious look at the future of our health care system, and ask ourselves if we are serious about fixing it. It is a decision that will impact millions of Americans. I urge the President to support the CHIP bill to allow more American children access to the healthcare they need to stay healthy, to stay alert and to function well in school. The best investment we can make is in our children and by signing the CHIP bill, the President can grant our future generation of over 10 million children access to vital health care services.

Press Release of Senator Murkowski

## **Republican Senator's Support Children's Health Insurance Program**

**Contact:** Press Office - (202) 224-4513  
Thursday, September 27, 2007

WASHINGTON — Sens. Chuck Grassley and Orrin Hatch said there is significant support among Republicans for bicameral legislation to reauthorize the children's health insurance program.

The Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act under consideration today maintains all of the key policy provisions of the bill passed by the Senate in August, including a cap on new spending of \$35 billion.

Grassley and Hatch helped to draft the legislation as Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Finance and Ranking Member of the Finance Subcommittee on Health Care. They said the support of so many leading Republican senators indicates the strength of the bill and the success of the SCHIP program.

Supporters said:

“It is critical that we not let SCHIP expire and that we extend the program to cover additional low-income children. I urge my Senate colleagues to approve this vital legislation by a veto-proof margin. This program simply cannot be allowed to expire,” said Sen. Susan Collins of Maine.

“While some may mistakenly characterize S-CHIP coverage as a welfare benefit, what they may not realize is that nearly 90 percent of uninsured children come from families where at least one parent is working. Today, fewer than half of parents in families earning less than \$40,000 a year are offered health insurance through their employer—a nine percent drop since 1997. S-CHIP has proved to be both a successful program and a saving grace for millions of American families who otherwise simply could not afford to pay for their children's health care. Compromise on both sides of the aisle helped us create this program ten years ago and hopefully a renewed sense of bipartisan commitment will help us successfully reauthorize this vital program today,” Sen. Olympia Snowe of Maine.

“This bill marries good policy with good health care common-sense by funding a vital program for kids and discouraging smoking among our youth. We have found a workable solution to get coverage to those kids in need without over-extending the goals of the program. It would be irresponsible of the White House to veto this bill and deny millions of kids their chance at a healthy childhood,” said Sen. Gordon Smith of Oregon. “I am proud to support this important bill, which will provide health insurance coverage to approximately 4 million more children who would otherwise be uninsured. I'm glad my colleagues and I were able to put politics aside and do what is right for these children,” said Sen. Pat Roberts of Kansas.

“SCHIP is an important program to New Hampshire, providing health care coverage to thousands of lower-income children that would otherwise go uninsured. Months ago, I made a commitment to support reauthorization. I followed through by backing the Senate bill in August and will do so again when the final bill reaches the floor. House and Senate negotiators took the right step in rejecting drastic and unacceptable cuts to Medicare in the original House-passed legislation – a measure that would have jeopardized millions in funding to New Hampshire’s hospitals and nursing homes and would have all but eliminated the Medicare Advantage program that provides health care to more than 3,000 New Hampshire seniors,” said Sen. John Sununu of New Hampshire.

“New Mexico has a persistent problem with uninsured children. I helped create SCHIP as part of the 1997 Balanced Budget Act. My commitment to children’s health care remains firm today, and I believe this compromise SCHIP reauthorization bill should be enacted. The program has been a success. The number of children without health coverage has declined but the need for this program remains,” said Sen. Pete Domenici of New Mexico.

**“The Children’s Health Insurance Program extends vital health care coverage to one of the most vulnerable segments of our population – low income children. Until we in Congress can agree on how to address the future of our nation’s health care policies, programs like the child health insurance program are needed to ensure that these children are not left out,” said Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska.**

“This is about doing the right thing for families and ensuring access to health insurance for children who need it most. Passing an SCHIP bill is vital to Minnesota’s efforts to provide coverage for the state’s 80,000 uninsured children. This bill represents a sensible, bipartisan compromise, and I strongly encourage the President to sign it into law,” said Sen. Norm Coleman of Minnesota.

“We know that thousands of Alaska’s children have no health insurance. The passage of the SCHIP reauthorization bill is a first step in covering them. It ensures that one of our State’s most important programs – Denali KidCare – receives the necessary funds to deliver basic prevention and treatment services. Routine visits to doctors and dentists, substance abuse treatment, and essential prescription drugs can all be made available to our children and teens thanks to this funding,” said Sen. Ted Stevens of Alaska.

“The CHIP program works for America’s children. Because of this legislation six million children are receiving the health care they need to become healthy, productive citizens. When something works we must do everything in our power to continue its success. The bill we voted on today is a good compromise that addresses viewpoints from both sides of the aisle in the Senate, and between the House and the Senate. If this bill passes and the President lets it stand, we can help four million more of our nation’s children. This is what it is all about – helping those who cannot help themselves,” Hatch said.

“The legislation gets the children’s health insurance back on track by making states enroll low-income children and cutting off adult coverage. About half the new money is just to keep the program running for the kids already on it. The rest goes to enroll as many as 4 million new kids,” Grassley said.