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State Rep. Gonzales Urges Congress to Override SCHIP Veto

Texas Legislator Pushes Federal Counterparts to Address Uninsured Children

Fresh Ink

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McAllen—State Representative Gonzales (D-McAllen) announced that she has contacted every member of her Congressional Delegation and urged them to vote to overturn President Bush's irresponsible veto of the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2007. Rep. Gonzales reiterated her support for expanding the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) in Texas and nationally.

More than a million Texas children have no health insurance, and thousands more are underinsured. SCHIP has provided low-cost health insurance to children of low-income families in Texas and across the nation for the past 10 years. For every \$1 invested by the state government, Texas receives \$2.64 in matching funds from the federal government.

Recently, the Texas Legislature approved changes in eligibility requirements that are estimated to increase enrollment here in Texas by more than 100,000 children. Those changes are intended to help repair the damage inflicted by the Republican-controlled state legislature in 2003 when more than 200,000 eligible children were cut from CHIP.

"Our Congressmen and Senators have a duty to hundreds of thousands of Texas children to vote to override the SCHIP veto," said Rep. Gonzales. "It doesn't make sense to deny low-cost health insurance to children from low-income families. These families work hard, but with sky rocketing healthcare costs they just can't afford doctors' visits for their children. Doctors groups support CHIP because it allows families to provide a medical home to their children. Without CHIP, these kids are going to end up in our already overcrowded emergency rooms—our representatives in Washington must recognize those facts."

The SCHIP legislation passed both the U.S. House and Senate with large bipartisan majorities. It also has the support of a broad group of stakeholders, including the AARP, American Medical Association, the Federation of American Hospitals, the March of Dimes, and hundreds of others. 43 governors have expressed their support for the legislation.

"Here is the opportunity to do the right thing for children who, through no fault of their own, are growing up without regular health care," said Rep. Gonzales. "How can we expect a sick child to go to school, much less excel in the classroom? I am proud that Congressmen Ruben Hinojosa and Henry Cuellar along with Senator Hutchison voted to provide children health care access and I applaud the many Texas congressmen that have already put their full support behind expanding the Children's Health Insurance Program. I hope that they will be joined by the other members of the Texas delegation in support of overriding this veto. The choice is either to leave millions of children without proper medical care in a time of need, or get those children health insurance."

Rep. Gonzales encouraged constituents to contact their federal representatives and senators to voice their support for overriding the President's veto of the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act.

"Call your federal representative and call Senators Hutchinson and Cornyn. Let them know that you support the children's health insurance program because we shouldn't leave sick children behind," Rep. Gonzales said.