

HENRY A. WAXMAN, CALIFORNIA  
EDWARD J. MARKEY, MASSACHUSETTS  
RICK BOUCHER, VIRGINIA  
EDOLPHUS TOWNS, NEW YORK  
FRANK PALLONE, Jr., NEW JERSEY  
BART GORDON, TENNESSEE  
BOBBY L. RUSH, ILLINOIS  
ANNA G. ESHOO, CALIFORNIA  
BART STUPAK, MICHIGAN  
ELIOT L. ENGEL, NEW YORK  
ALBERT R. WYNN, MARYLAND  
GENE GREEN, TEXAS  
DIANA DeGETTE, COLORADO  
VICE CHAIRMAN  
LOIS CAPPS, CALIFORNIA  
MIKE DOYLE, PENNSYLVANIA  
JANE HARMAN, CALIFORNIA  
TOM ALLEN, MAINE  
JAN SCHAKOWSKY, ILLINOIS  
HILDA L. SOLIS, CALIFORNIA  
CHARLES A. GONZALEZ, TEXAS  
JAY INSLEE, WASHINGTON  
TAMMY BALDWIN, WISCONSIN  
MIKE ROSS, ARKANSAS  
DARLENE HOOLEY, OREGON  
ANTHONY D. WEINER, NEW YORK  
JIM MATHESON, UTAH  
G.K. BUTTERFIELD, NORTH CAROLINA  
CHARLIE MELANCON, LOUISIANA  
JOHN BARROW, GEORGIA  
BARON P. HILL, INDIANA

ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS

**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Energy and Commerce**  
**Washington, DC 20515-6115**

JOHN D. DINGELL, MICHIGAN  
CHAIRMAN

July 17, 2007

JOE BARTON, TEXAS  
RANKING MEMBER  
RALPH M. HALL, TEXAS  
J. DENNIS HASTERT, ILLINOIS  
FRED UPTON, MICHIGAN  
CLIFF STEARNS, FLORIDA  
NATHAN DEAL, GEORGIA  
ED WHITFIELD, KENTUCKY  
BARBARA CUBIN, WYOMING  
JOHN SHIMKUS, ILLINOIS  
HEATHER WILSON, NEW MEXICO  
JOHN B. SHADEGG, ARIZONA  
CHARLES W. "CHIP" PICKERING, MISSISSIPPI  
VITO FOSSSELLA, NEW YORK  
STEVE BUYER, INDIANA  
GEORGE RADANOVICH, CALIFORNIA  
JOSEPH R. PITTS, PENNSYLVANIA  
MARY BONO, CALIFORNIA  
GREG WALDEN, OREGON  
LEE TERRY, NEBRASKA  
MIKE FERGUSON, NEW JERSEY  
MIKE ROGERS, MICHIGAN  
SUE MYRICK, NORTH CAROLINA  
JOHN SULLIVAN, OKLAHOMA  
TIM MURPHY, PENNSYLVANIA  
MICHAEL C. BURGESS, TEXAS  
MARSHA BLACKBURN, TENNESSEE

**"There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul, Nelson Mandela once said,  
than the way in which it treats its children."**

DENNIS B. FITZGIBBONS, CHIEF OF STAFF  
GREGG A. ROTHSCHILD, CHIEF COUNSEL

**Congress must reauthorize a robust SCHIP program**

Dear Democratic Colleague:

The State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) was enacted in 1997 with a 10-year authorization. Since then, this program has had remarkable success, covering six million children annually. In fact, one in three U.S. children receives health insurance coverage through SCHIP or Medicaid.

That authorization expires this September. If we do not act on SCHIP, the funding will stop and the six million children on the program will likely lose their insurance. As the attached op-ed notes, nine million U.S. children lack health insurance coverage, and of those children approximately two-thirds are currently eligible but not enrolled in either SCHIP or Medicaid. We must not only protect the coverage of the children who have it, but also help as many of those who qualify as we can. The budget's \$50 billion reserve fund will provide a substantial down payment toward accomplishing this goal.

The President's proposed budget, on the other hand, would eliminate this affordable coverage for children in families who earn as little as \$36,000 a year. It would significantly under-fund SCHIP, causing millions to be added to the rolls of the uninsured. In addition, it proposes to take away money from hospitals that care for the indigent in order to give vouchers for insurance that has no minimum standards and may not be there when they need it. Finally, it proposes tax code changes that would increase the cost of coverage for middle-class families who now have health insurance.

Arguments are being made that Congress cannot afford to spend \$50 billion for children. The truth is we can hardly afford not to. Four years ago, Congress passed a \$400 billion bill – unpaid for – that gave seniors drug coverage. Spending far less on our children is the right thing to do, particularly when such spending will not increase the deficit.

SCHIP reauthorization and improvement should be the crowning achievement of this Congress. Earlier this year, we heard the tragic story of two children who died because they were unable to receive crucial dental care. Millions of other children suffer each day because their families cannot afford or are unable to get the medical care their children need.

The attached article by Bob Herbert sums up what is at stake in this debate: What's the sense of being the richest Nation in the world if we can't even keep our children healthy and alive?

We look forward to working with our Caucus to get the job done.

Sincerely,

  
John D. Dingell

  
Frank Pallone, Jr.

June 12, 2007

OP-ED COLUMNIST

## The Divide in Caring for Our Kids

By **BOB HERBERT**

A few weeks ago, Teri Hatcher, one of the stars of the television series *Desperate Housewives*, was on David Letterman's show, talking very animatedly about a time when her daughter needed emergency dental care.

It was causing her some pain, Ms. Hatcher said. And then, of course, it was a Friday night. Overnight the whole thing blew up and it turned out to be an abscess.

Where to get a dentist on a Saturday?

Luckily, Ms. Hatcher's best friend is married to a dentist who was more than happy to open up his office that Saturday. But he needed an assistant. Ms. Hatcher volunteered.

She digressed: I hate the dentist.... Just my whole life, you know. Its the worst. I would do anything to get out of going to the dentist. Really. Anything.

But Ms. Hatcher stood there like a trouper as the dentist examined her daughters tooth. He sees it is an abscess, and he has to do surgery, she said. So you, I'm trying to I hate it. I'm squeamish. I'm going to throw up, and then I'm trying to pull it together...

So he does the Novocaine and gives her a little of the gas. She is perfectly fine, because she's going, I love the dentist. I want to come here every

day. And then, of course, I'm thinking, Can I take a tank of that home? Because that is really what I need.

And so on. The story, of course, had a happy ending. Ms. Hatcher's daughter was fine. Mr. Letterman got to tell a raunchy dentist joke. The audience was amused, and Ms. Hatcher eventually exited to a robust round of applause.

I was particularly interested in the segment because just a few hours earlier I had filed a column for the next day's paper about health care for children. The column included the story of Deamonte Driver, a homeless 12-year-old from Prince Georges County, Md., who also had an abscessed tooth.

Now, if I had been in Ms. Hatcher's position, I would have done exactly as she did. I would have knocked down doors if necessary to get help for a child in distress. So this is no criticism of her. It's an illustration of the kind of stunning differences in fortune that can face youngsters living at opposite ends of America's vast economic divide.

Deamonte needed his tooth pulled, a procedure that was estimated to cost \$80. But his mother, Alyce Driver, had no health insurance for her children. She believes their Medicaid coverage lapsed early this year because of a bureaucratic foul-up, perhaps because paperwork was mailed to a homeless shelter after they had left. In any event, it would have been difficult for Ms. Driver to find an oral surgeon willing to treat a Medicaid patient.

Untreated, the pain in Deamonte's tooth grew worse. He was taken to a hospital emergency room, where he was given medication for pain and sinusitis and sent home.

What started as a toothache now became a nightmare. Bacteria from the abscess had spread to Deamonte's brain. The child was in agony, and on Feb. 25 he died.

There's a presidential election under way, but this sort of thing is not a big part of the campaign. American children are dying because of a lack of access to health care, and were worried about Mitt Romney's religion and asking candidates to raise their hands to show whether they believe in evolution. I'm starting to believe in time travel because there's no doubt this nation is moving backward.

There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul, Nelson Mandela once said, than the way in which it treats its children.

There are nine million children who lack health care in the U.S. and millions more who are eligible for coverage but fall through the cracks for one reason or another.

What we need is a national commitment to provide basic health care to all children, not just the children of the well-to-do. This should be a no-brainer. You're a child in the United States? You've got health care. We're not going to let you die from a toothache. We're better than that. We're not going to let your family go bankrupt because you've got cancer or some other disease, or because you've been in a terrible accident.

The cost? Don't fall for that bogymen.

There's plenty of give in Americas glittering \$13 trillion economy. What's the sense of being the richest nation on the planet if you can't even afford to keep your children healthy and alive?