

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR AND CONGRESS OF INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATIONS



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LEGISLATIVE ALERT!

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Dear Representative:

On behalf of the AFL-CIO, I urge you to vote to override the President's veto of H.R. 976, the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2007. This legislation would reduce the number of uninsured children in this country by nearly 4 million, thereby ensuring that millions more low-income children get the health care they need.

Since the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) was enacted in 1997 with broad bipartisan backing, the number of uninsured children has dropped by one third. But the erosion of employer-sponsored benefits has caught up with children. Since 2000, the share of Americans with employer-sponsored benefits has dropped 7 percent, and the number of uninsured children has grown by one million in just the last two years.

The CHIP compromise bill before the House for a vote today continues the program's tradition of bipartisan support. Unfortunately, the President vetoed this carefully crafted legislation and is using distortions of the bill to justify a position that puts him at odds not only with many members of his own party but also the vast majority of Americans across the political spectrum.

For example, the President has said H.R. 976 would change a program meant to help poor children into one that covers children in households making up to \$83,000. In fact, this compromise bill does not change states' eligibility standards and retains the President's authority to deny any state proposal to cover children in families with income above two times the federal poverty level. Furthermore, the bill is well targeted to extend coverage to the lowest income children who now have no health insurance. More than 75 percent of the children expected to gain coverage under the compromise bill have family incomes below twice the poverty level, or \$41,300 for a family of four.

With the number of uninsured children rising in this country, now is the time to build on the success of CHIP to significantly reverse that trend. It is unacceptable to claim support for children and CHIP and then vote to sustain the President's veto, with vague promises that another compromise bill will deliver real help to our nation's children.

Democratic leaders have already compromised with Republicans to get a bill with broad bipartisan support and the President's proposed level of funding won't even keep pace with the rising cost of coverage for the children now enrolled in CHIP. To compromise further would mean shutting out some or possibly all of the nearly 4 million children who gain coverage under this bill. Now is the time to stand with children by voting to override the President's veto of this legislation.

Sincerely

William Samuel, Director
DEPARTMENT OF LEGISLATION