

## (May 29, 2008) Lipinski In Support of Health Care for American Workers

Health Insurance for Life Act (H.R. 2047)

Press Conference Statement~ May 29, 2008

Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Prentice Women's Hospital

Our economy has changed and today American workers can no longer count on having only one job for their entire career. In fact, American workers now average more than 10 jobs in a career. With the economy slowing down, more and more hard working Americans are seeing their jobs cut or their hours reduced.

And as nearly 60% of the American workforce obtains health insurance through their place of employment or the employer of a family member, when a worker loses their job, they not only face a loss of wages - they also face the loss of health insurance.

This is a big problem - The Center for Economic and Policy Research estimates that 4.2 million Americans could lose their insurance this year alone, and that's on top of the 47 million Americans already estimated to be without health insurance.

Congress first addressed this problem in the 1980's by passing into law the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985, or COBRA (signed into law in 1986). This legislation allows individuals to retain their health insurance for the first 18 months after losing or leaving a job. COBRA has helped keep the number of uninsured Americans down, ensuring more people have access to quality health care.

Today, I stand in support of H.R. 2047, the Health Insurance for Life Act, which is legislation that would remove the limit of 18 months of extended healthcare coverage. If passed into law, this bill would allow people to continue to receive COBRA coverage until they turn 65, at which time Medicare will take over.

By allowing people to retain COBRA benefits indefinitely, this bill will help reduce the number of uninsured Americans and also reduce some of the stress over the loss of health care coverage that is associated with losing or leaving a job.

While this bill does not claim to fix all of the complex challenges facing America's health care system, it is a common sense, low cost step we can take right now to reduce the number of uninsured and make health care more affordable. I am proud to support this bill with Rep. Kirk and Rep Dent (R-PA), and I look forward to working toward its passage.