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For Immediate Release

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Washington D.C. - Congressman John P. Murtha today commended the House of Representatives for passing the Children's Health and Medicare Protection Act (CHAMP), providing health care to 11 million children and protecting Medicare from privatization.

Established in 1997, the State Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) has successfully provided health insurance to low-income children across the country. Currently, six million children have health care because of CHIP, and since 1997 the number of children without health insurance has fallen by one-third.

The current CHIP program expires on September 30, 2007, and Congress's passage of the CHAMP Act ensures that these six million children will not lose their health insurance. The legislation also provides additional funding for five million uninsured children who are currently eligible but not yet enrolled in CHIP.

"This legislation not only protects the health insurance of six million American children, but allows CHIP to cover an additional five million children who were eligible but were not enrolled because of previous funding levels" said Murtha. "This is not only the right thing for Congress to do, but it is also affordable, costing less than \$3.50 a day to cover a child through CHIP."

The CHAMP Act also protects Medicare from privatization and promotes fiscal responsibility by reducing overpayments to private insurance plans, which currently cost American taxpayers billions of dollars because private plans on average cost 12 percent more than traditional Medicare.

The legislation also makes preventive health check-ups - like tests, screenings, and vaccines - more affordable to seniors by eliminating co-payments and deductibles. This is essential to reducing health care costs and saving lives.

The CHAMP Act is paid for by an increase in the current tobacco tax. Studies have shown that this will help deter kids from taking up smoking and will save billions of dollars in health care costs in the future.

