

January 14, 2009 - Murtha: House Passes Bipartisan Children's Health Bill

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Congressman John P. Murtha (PA-12) today joined a majority in the U.S. House of Representatives to pass bipartisan legislation which provides health care to 11 million uninsured American children. The Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) Reauthorization Act was approved by a vote of 289-139.

The State Children's Health Insurance Program - or "SCHIP" - was established by Congress in 1997 and provides matching funds to states to help them provide health care coverage for children whose families earn too much to qualify for Medicaid but not enough to afford private insurance.

"This bipartisan legislation provides health care to 11 million children, including over 227,000 living right here in Pennsylvania," said Murtha. "The CHIP program improves both the health and chance for success of these children, and it saves us money by reducing costly emergency room visits which have come to supplement primary care."

In the early 1990s, the Pennsylvania's Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) was slated to be eliminated by federal regulations. Working with then Governor Casey, Congressman Murtha was able to convince the Clinton Administration to work out the problem, saving Pennsylvania's children's health care program. The Pennsylvania CHIP program later became a model for the national CHIP program we have today.

The bipartisan bill that passed the House of Representatives today reauthorizes the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) through Fiscal Year 2013, preserves the coverage for all 7.1 million children currently covered by SCHIP, and extends health care coverage to 4.1 million additional low-income children who are currently uninsured.

"Reauthorizing the CHIP program, and expanding it to meet the needs of an additional four million children, is the right and responsible thing to do," added Murtha.

President Bush vetoed similar legislation twice. It is expected that this bill will be one of the first bills signed into law by President Obama.

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