

Says Reauthorization Must First Focus on Those Who Need it Most



Washington, Jan 14 - U.S. Congressman Mike Pence released the following statement regarding House consideration of H.R. 2, which would require a tax increase to fund a major expansion of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP):

"In 1997, the Republican Congress enacted the State Children's Health Insurance Program to help children's families near poverty. But now, true to their big government agenda, the Democrat Congress wants to send the President-elect a massive increase in the SCHIP Program that will usher in a new era of socialized medicine in America.

"This bill will take a program designed to help children near the poverty level and expand it to include families with incomes of up to \$84,000 a year.

"And Democrats will pay for this middle class entitlement with a 61 cent - \$1 per pack tax increase on cigarettes.

"Let's provide health insurance for children of the poor, but let's reject a liberal Democratic Congress attempt to create middle class entitlements on the backs of American smokers.

"Since Congress has already reauthorized and fully funded SCHIP through March 31, 2009, we should work in a bipartisan manner to thoughtfully develop a longer-term reauthorization of the State Children's Health Insurance Program.

"While I have been pleased to support SCHIP in the past, and continue to support its original intention to cover needy children who do not qualify for Medicaid, the bill being considered today hardly resembles the bipartisan compromise reached in 1997.

"My Republican colleagues and I are eager to work with Democrats – as we did more than ten years ago – to ensure that needy children receive health care coverage. As the program expands, health care for needy children is jeopardized. Republicans will work tirelessly to see that every currently eligible child is covered first and that taxes are not

raised on the poorest among us.

“The Democrats’ SCHIP bill spends billions of dollars to substitute private health insurance coverage with government-run healthcare coverage. The Democrats’ SCHIP bill taxes the poor to benefit the middle class. The bill uses the funding gained from taxing the poor to pay for expanding SCHIP eligibility to higher-income families. The Democrats’ SCHIP bill focuses on enrolling higher-income kids instead of low-income, uninsured kids. The Democrats’ SCHIP bill enables illegal aliens to fraudulently enroll in Medicaid and SCHIP.

“Short of finding at least 22.4 million new smokers (the number required to adequately fund SCHIP) Democrats will be forced to either kick millions of children off of health insurance or raise taxes on all of us by tens of billions of dollars.

“It is irresponsible to fund a children’s health program, particularly one targeted at vulnerable children, with a declining revenue stream.

“The revenue to fund this expansion will soon disappear, causing all of us to pay more in taxes.

“The percentage of Americans who smoke has been dropping for decades. And research and logic both show that raising the prices of cigarettes will lead to less smoking, and therefore less revenue.

“The Democrat expansion of SCHIP takes money from taxpayers in states like Indiana to pay for middle class children in wealthier states.

“I oppose this legislation and urge my colleagues to do the same.”