



## **Time for Congress to fix President's mistake on health care**

By Maureen Farrell

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The President's veto of legislation reauthorizing the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) is misguided. It harms working families who do not have access to or cannot afford the astronomical cost of health insurance.

The President's veto makes it loud and clear that children's health care and coverage of the uninsured are not priorities for this administration. This veto flies in the face of tremendous bipartisan efforts over the past several months to carefully craft SCHIP legislation that the majority of Congress can get behind. The bill passed by large margins in both the House and the Senate, yet the President chose to ignore this widely supported compromise and use his veto power to deny health care to millions of children.

The latest U.S. Census data shows that the number of uninsured children in this country has increased by more than a million in the past two years. At 17 percent, Colorado has one of the highest rates of uninsured people in the country, and according to 2005 data, we have the seventh highest rate of uninsured kids.

The Administration has tried throughout this debate to shift our attention away from the real needs of working families in this country. This veto discounts entirely the needs of our nation's children, despite all the evidence and facts about the impact of failing to support this legislation.

How could the President veto legislation that provides states with a stable funding source that will help insure nearly 4 million children who would otherwise be uninsured? These are children whose parents work but still cannot afford health insurance. How could any Member of Congress from Colorado vote against a bill that would provide insurance to 60,000 kids in our own state who otherwise would not be insured? Is this really a time for the federal government to be turning its back on families and kids?

CHIP has a proven track record of success insuring six million children since its creation in 1997. This is real stuff that works, that keeps kids healthy, and that keeps families from using expensive emergency room services and driving up health care costs for all of us.

Congress must rally in support of SCHIP and throw its collective political muscle into ensuring that working families, including children and pregnant women, have access to health care. It's time for our congressional delegation to follow the bipartisan lead of Republicans like Senators Grassley and Hatch and Democrats like Senator Baucus and Representative DeGette and vote to override this devastating veto.

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