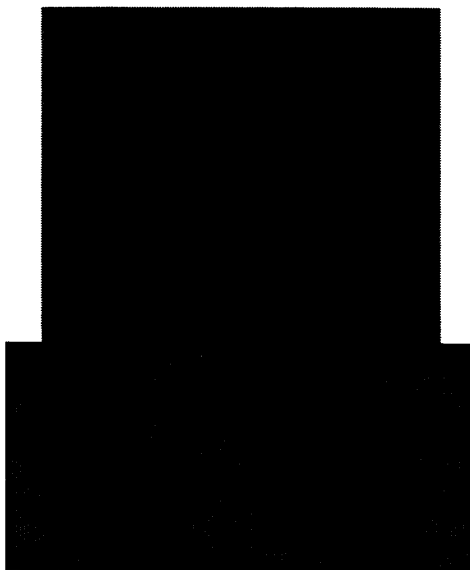


LEGISLATIVE UPDATES
Addendum



Health Care Justice Program
Justice and witness Ministries
United Church of Christ
2008



STATE CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM (SCHIP) UPDATE—The Sage Continues. . .

On October 2, the Congress sent the President the bipartisan State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), bill H.R. 976, which provided 10 million American children with health care. The bill had been passed by strong, bipartisan votes in the House and the Senate. And, yet, unfortunately, on October 3, the President vetoed this bill.

On October 25, the House passed a revised version of this bill, H.R. 3963, which once again provides 10 million American children. This revised bill addressed many of the concerns raised in the H.R. 976. The changes included:

- Ensuring upper-income children do not exceed coverage. Only families with gross incomes below \$51,500 for a family of three (300 percent of poverty) will receive SCHIP coverage.
- Ensuring the lowest-income children are served first. States will only receive bonus payments for enrolling the lowest income children, those eligible for Medicaid first.
- Phasing out coverage of adults.
- Preventing "Crowding Out" of private coverage. Requires all states to develop plans and to implement recommended best practices for minimizing "the crowd-out" of private coverage.
- Ensuring ONLY citizens and legal immigrants receive coverage.

The Senate also passed this bill. Unfortunately, on December 12, the President vetoed this bill again.

On December 21, 2007, Congress extended the CHIP program until March 2009 with the passage of the Medicare, Medicaid and SCHIP Extension Act of 2007 (S. 2499). This legislation includes just enough money to sustain the program at its current level and keep the approximately 6 million children in CHIP from losing their health coverage.

Unfortunately, the legislation does not include funds to extend the program to cover more than nine million uninsured children in America and it does not make policy improvements to enroll the more than four million uninsured children who are currently eligible for the program but not enrolled. This bill was subsequently signed by President Bush on December 29, 2007.

On January 23, a vote to overturn the President's second veto on the revised Children's Health Insurance Program took place. The vote narrowly failed to overturn the veto. Because of this vote, the extension will stay in place.

In 2008, we must continue to advocate for access to comprehensive health coverage for all children. Continue to write or call your Congressional representatives.

Thank your Senators and representatives for their hard work on the compromise bill because it is a step in the right direction.

Urge them to continue to reject any negotiations that would further weaken the already compromised legislation to reauthorize the State Children's Health Insurance Program.

Remind them that current funding levels are not sufficient for many states to maintain current children enrolled in SCHIP. Additional funding may be needed.

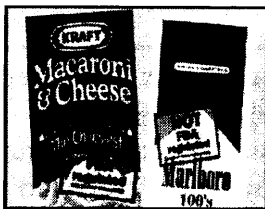
Encourage them to transcend partisan politics for the common good of all children.

References:

Children's Defense Fund—www.childrensdefense.org

Families USA—www.familiesusa.org

Speaker Nancy Pelosi—www.speaker.gov



UPDATE ON LEGISLATION TO GIVE FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION (FDA) AUTHORITY TO REGULATE TOBACCO PRODUCTS

Tobacco-caused disease is the leading preventable cause of death in our country—killing more than 400,000 people each year. More than four decades after the Surgeon General's report linking cigarettes to cancer, tobacco products are virtually unregulated to protect our health and safety. The Food and Drug Administration can regulate a box of macaroni and cheese, but not a pack of cigarettes. S. 625/H.R. 1108 would protect public health and end this strange and unjust double-standard.

With the second session of the 110th Congress under way, preparing for the passage of the FDA/tobacco bill, S. 625/H.R. 1108, continues to be a public health priority. The first session closed with 217 House members and 55 Senators supporting the FDA/tobacco bill.

Advocates are pushing the House Energy and Commerce Committee's Subcommittee on Health to scheduled a mark up of HR 1108, and are urging members to stay with the public health community on any amendments to the bill. in the Senate advocates need to continue strengthening our support. The Senate is just five Senators short of the 60 needed to win a cloture vote and prevent a promised filibuster.

Passage of this critical legislation would allow the FDA to:

- Restrict tobacco marketing and sales to children;
- Require changes in tobacco products to make them less toxic and less addictive;
- Stop tobacco companies from misleading the public about the health consequences of using their products; and,
- End the double-standard for tobacco products.

These are common-sense consumer protections that should have become law a long time ago.

Reference

The Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids—
www.tobaccofreekids.org



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