

Altmire Votes to Protect Health Care for America's Children

(Washington, DC) - U.S. Representative Jason Altmire (PA-4) voted today in support of the bipartisan House-Senate compromise to reauthorize the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). The \$35 billion package would protect health care coverage for over 6 million children currently enrolled in the program and add up to 4 million more. Congressman Altmire strongly urged President Bush to withdraw his veto threat and to quickly sign the measure into law before the SCHIP program expires on September 30, 2007. Without an extension of SCHIP, health care coverage for 180,000 Pennsylvania children could be threatened.

"President Bush continues to ignore the stark reality faced by thousands of Pennsylvania's working families, families who work hard and play by the rules but are finding it increasingly difficult to afford health care coverage for their children," said Congressman Altmire. "Rather than joining us in our effort to ensure that every child has a healthy future, he stubbornly continues to push policies that would instead cut children from the health care rolls. I again call on the president to end the political gamesmanship with children's health care coverage and to work with Congress to solve the problem of providing 9 million uninsured children with health care."

"One out of every eight American children - over 280,000 in Pennsylvania - are uninsured. Congress is doing its part, and now it's the president's turn," continued Congressman Altmire. "We must act now to extend the SCHIP program and protect the health care coverage of Pennsylvania's children."

The State Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2007 invests \$35 billion over five years to strengthen and improve SCHIP. The bill ensures that the over 6 million children who currently participate in SCHIP will continue to receive health coverage and provides states with the resources to add up to 4 million additional children to the program. Further, the measure will also provide enrolled children with quality dental care and mental health services on par with medical and surgical benefits currently covered under SCHIP.

The House passed the State Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act today by a bipartisan vote of 265 to 159. Senate passage is expected later this week. The bill has been endorsed by AARP, America's Health Insurance Plans, Consumer Health Coalition, Families USA, Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children, and over 270 other organizations.

The State Children's Health Insurance Program was established by Congress in 1997 to expand health coverage for children. It provides matching funds to states to help them provide health care to children living in families that are earning too much for Medicaid but not enough to afford private insurance. Since it was created in 1997, SCHIP has been a successful, cost-effective program.