



SCHIP Reauthorization Passes House

On Tuesday, September 25, the House of Representatives voted 265-159 in favor of reauthorizing the State Children's Health Insurance (SCHIP) program and adding \$35 billion over five years to extend coverage to an additional 4 million children. Forty-five Republicans broke rank with their leadership and voted in support of the bill, while eight Democrats opposed the bill – including Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-OH) who believed the compromise bill went too far. The compromise measure also includes a moratorium on an effort by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to cut off matching funds for doing Medicaid outreach in schools and for transporting students with disabilities. The moratorium would expire May 28.

While SCHIP passed the House yesterday, the number of votes in support of the bill is not large enough to override a threatened veto by the President. Specifically, the tally was 19 short of the number of “yes” votes needed. In response, Speaker Pelosi has stated her intention to bring up the issue repeatedly and to continue to enlist the help of moderate Republicans – from both chambers – such as Sen. Charles Grassley (R-IA), Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-UT) and Rep. Ray LaHood (R-IL). Rep. John Dingell (D-MI) sounded a positive note and stated, “We are within shouting distance...I wouldn't want to be the guy that vetoes this bill. And I would not want to be the guy that supports the fellow who did veto the bill.”

Majority Leader Sen. Harry Reid (D-NV) has filed a cloture petition that sets up a vote on SCHIP in that chamber as soon as Thursday. The bill is likely to be passed with enough support to override the veto. In addition, the Senate will have one more vote in favor of the bill with the return of Senator Tim Johnson (D-SD).

It is also interesting to note that the House Democratic leadership had to contend with the concerns of members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC) who threatened to vote against the bill in protest over a provision that was dropped from the version of the bill that the House approved last summer. This provision would have given benefits to the children of legal immigrants. In the end, the entire CHC *did* vote for the bill, but only after several members first tallied a “present” vote, or a “no” vote. On a somewhat related matter, some House Republicans also said the bill would make it easier for illegal immigrants to enroll in Medicaid or SCHIP, because of a provision that would be relaxed which required Medicaid applicants to prove their citizenship. Sen. Grassley also came out strong in support of this measure and stated that “the 2006 proof-of-citizenship law isn't working well.” He went on to lambaste opponents to the provision in a letter to

Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader John Boehner (R-OH) saying “the overheated and misleading rhetoric from opponents of this children’s health reauthorization bill is nothing more than a desperate attempt to divert your attention from voting for a children’s health bill.”

Republicans on both side of the Capitol are calling for more negotiations. While the President reiterated his opposition to the bill yesterday by stating in a press release that the bill “goes too far toward federalizing health care and turns a program meant to help low-income children into one that covers children in some households with incomes of up to \$83,000 a year.” Senate Minority Whip Trent Lott (R-MS) said he would be willing to expand SCHIP beyond the \$5 billion in new funds the White House wants, but also believes that \$35 billion is unattainable. Representative Dave Camp (R- MI) said that “several provisions would need to be rewritten before House Republicans would consider voting for a bill that included new money over \$5 billion.” “Bickering” continues between the chambers and within each party which will ensure that a short-term extension of the law will be necessary. In fact, the House will include such language in the Continuing Resolution they are debating today to keep the federal government in operation as the fiscal year also ends on September 30th and the appropriations process also remains behind schedule and unresolved.

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