

have private health insurance to government coverage. As a result, I cannot sign this legislation.

The purpose of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) was to help low-income children whose families were struggling, but did not qualify for Medicaid, to get the health care coverage that they needed. My Administration strongly supports reauthorization of SCHIP. That is why in February of this year I proposed a 5-year reauthorization of SCHIP and a 20 percent increase in funding for the program.

Some in the Congress have sought to spend more on SCHIP than my budget proposal. In response, I told the Congress that I was willing to work with its leadership to find any additional funds necessary to put poor children first, without raising taxes.

The leadership in the Congress has refused to meet with my Administration's representatives. Although they claim to have made "substantial changes" to the legislation, H.R. 3963 is essentially identical to the legislation that I vetoed in October. The legislation would still shift SCHIP away from its original purpose by covering adults. It would still include coverage of

many individuals with incomes higher than the median income in the United States. It would still result in government health care for approximately 2 million children who already have private health care coverage. The new bill, like the old bill, does not responsibly offset its new and unnecessary spending, and it still raises taxes on working Americans.

Because the Congress has chosen to send me an essentially identical bill that has the same problems as the flawed bill I previously vetoed, I must veto this legislation, too. I continue to stand ready to work with the leaders of the Congress, on a bipartisan basis, to reauthorize the SCHIP program in a way that puts poor children first; moves adults out of a program meant for children; and does not abandon the bipartisan tradition that marked the original enactment of the SCHIP program. In the interim, I call on the Congress to extend funding under the current program to ensure no disruption of services to needy children.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
December 12, 2007.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Umaru Yar'Adua of Nigeria *December 13, 2007*

President Bush. Mr. President, it's been my honor to welcome you here to the White House. Now, we've just had a very extensive and fruitful discussion on a variety of issues, and that's what you'd expect when friends meet together.

I—the President is committed to democracy and rule of law. He was very articulate in his desire to make sure that the people of Nigeria understand that their Government will be fair and transparent and will be a government of the people. Mr. Presi-

dent, I am impressed by your commitment to reform, your adherence to the concept that rule of law, and your belief in transparency. And I congratulate you for being a strong leader.

We also talked about social justice issues, the issue of education. The President is committed to seeing to it that compulsory education is followed through on in this country, throughout the country, and I admire that. And we want to help you. The United States has got a program that is

dedicated to making sure every child gets a good education. It's in our national interests that that be the case.

It's also in our national interests, Mr. President, to help you, if you so desire, on issues like HIV/AIDS and malaria. The President is strongly committed to helping the Nigerian families affected by these diseases get treatment and help. He understands that there needs to be a comprehensive program of prevention, distribution of antiretrovirals, and then a capacity to help the orphans who have been left behind as a result of this terrible disease. And we're committed through what we call PEPFAR, Mr. President. I'm going to the United States Congress and ask them to double our commitment because we believe it's in our interests to help you if you so desire. It's in our interests from a security perspective; it's in our interests from a moral perspective.

And so we've got a good visit. I'm proud you're here, and I welcome you and thank you for your time and for your heart.

President Yar'Adua. Thank you very much, Mr. President. I feel highly honored and privileged to be here and have the opportunity to share these few moments with you. These are moments that I'll never forget in my life.

I have briefed Mr. President on the situation in Nigeria, our efforts to anchor democracy on the rule of law, to help a credible electoral process, and to ensure that the principles of justice, equity will guide the conduct of affairs in Nigeria: transparency, accountability, and the fight against corruption. And Mr. President has expressed the support of himself and the Government of the United States and the people of the United States to assist Nigeria to ensure that we continue to uphold—*[inaudible]*—democracy, the rule of law, zero tolerance for corruption, and the development of a free market economy through economic reforms that we have been effecting for the last 8 years.

Now, this will set the principles upon which we'll build and develop a free society capable of growing an economy that will cater for the development and needs of the people of Nigeria. And in this great effort we are making, we find great friendship and assistance from the Government and people of the United States. And we are very grateful for this expression of support, confidence, and trust.

We have discussed a wide range of issues beside democracy and the rule of law; we have—and the economic reforms. We have discussed about the problems of HIV/AIDS, the problem of malaria, challenges in education. And the United States Government will help us to meet these challenges as we go along. And I think this is an excellent humanitarian gesture for which I, personally, and the people and Government of Nigeria are extremely grateful.

We have discussed one—security issues and the security within Nigeria itself, within the Niger Delta region, and within the Gulf of Guinea. And we have also discussed security issues—peace and security on the African Continent. And we shall partner with—*[inaudible]*—to assist not only Nigeria but also the African Continent, to actualize its peace and security at its initiative, which is an initiative to help standby forces of brigade size in each of the regional economic groupings within the African Continent.

I think what we have discussed has given me hope. And myself, the Government, and people of Nigeria are inspired by the United States of America's achievement and the principles which guide it. And this is a posit we are trading, and the friendship and understanding of the United States will propel Nigeria with this inspiration to make the transformations that we need to do into a modern nation from an underdeveloped nation, capable of meeting the development and needs of its people.

I thank you very much, Mr. President. This is a rare opportunity.

President Bush. Thank you, sir. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:50 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Statement on the Death of Brigadier General Francois El Hajj of Lebanon December 13, 2007

I strongly condemn yesterday's assassination of Lebanese Brigadier General Francois El Hajj and extend my condolences to his family and the families of the innocents who were murdered alongside him.

This assassination marks the 12th political assassination or attempted assassination Lebanon has suffered since October 2004. Like the many victims before him, General El Hajj was a supporter of Lebanon's independence and an opponent of Syria's interference in Lebanon's internal affairs. I call on the international community to support the Government of Lebanon in its efforts to bring to justice the perpetrators of these vicious attacks and to stand with the citizens of Lebanon who continue to struggle to safeguard their freedom, sovereignty, and democracy.

This act of terrorism again reminds us of the importance of the international tribunal established by the U.N. Security Council earlier this year and of the urgency

of ensuring that the tribunal is fully funded and capable of commencing its operations as soon as possible, to begin holding accountable those responsible for this systematic campaign of murder against Lebanon's most ardent patriots. We must work together to support and strengthen an independent and democratic Lebanon.

This attack comes as Lebanon is seeking to choose a new President. The United States supports the efforts of the democratically elected Lebanese Government and the Lebanese Armed Forces to maintain the sovereignty and stability of Lebanon before the Presidential elections. As Lebanon seeks to select a President democratically and in accordance with its Constitution, interference by the Syrian regime and its allies, aimed at intimidating the Lebanese people, must end. The people of Lebanon deserve the opportunity to choose their leaders in freedom and without fear.

Remarks Following a Cabinet Meeting and an Exchange With Reporters December 14, 2007

The President. Good morning. I just finished meeting with members of my Cabinet. I am proud of this team. I appreciate their service to the country. We discussed the priorities that we're working on to meet the needs of the American people. We're talking about the business that remains on Capitol Hill.

I want to thank the Senate and congratulate the Senate for passing a good energy bill, and now the House must act. Congress

also must move quickly to pass legislation to protect middle class families from the burden of the Alternative Minimum Tax, without raising taxes. And Congress must pass legislation to ensure our intelligence professionals can continue to effectively monitor terrorist communications.

And Congress must move forward with spending legislation to fund the day-to-day operations of the Federal Government so