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House of Representatives

The House met at 9 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. LINCOLN DAVIS of Tennessee).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
October 16, 2007.

I hereby appoint the Honorable LINCOLN DAVIS to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2007, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 25 minutes and each Member, other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip, limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 9:50 a.m.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

SCHIP VETO

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, the vote to override President Bush's veto of SCHIP marks the culmination of the most disingenuous and deliberately misleading debate I have witnessed in my entire political career.

The partisan talking points from the Bush White House have been disputed not only by the independent experts, but by dozens of sensible Republicans like Senator GRASSLEY, Senator ROBERTS and Senator HATCH. The facts are

simple: working families are having great difficulty providing their children with health insurance.

This is not a program about poor kids, most of whom are already eligible for State Medicaid programs. SCHIP provides health care to children of working families who make too much to receive welfare, but can't afford private insurance. Everyone I talk to back home agrees that this is a problem government needs to address and that children of struggling working families shouldn't pay the price for Republican politics.

The President and his Republican defenders say that SCHIP shouldn't go to families who earn \$83,000 a year. Well, as Republican Senator GRASSLEY points out, this is why the bill doesn't authorize coverage at that income level.

The White House now opposes the bipartisan bill because it provides coverage for adults. Yet, over the last 6 years, the administration has cheerfully approved numerous waivers to allow States that have requested to extend coverage to some adults; for example, to pregnant women. This bill actually phases out adult coverage over 2 years, coverage the Bush White House used to think was a good idea, before they were against it.

We have heard complaints about the process, how Republicans were shut out of consideration of SCHIP reauthorization. Yet Commerce Committee Republicans wasted hour after hour demanding the bill be read line-by-line, aloud, instead of debating areas of concern and proposing their own amendments. Just because House Republicans chose to squander time with procedural games and stalling tactics is no justification for denying health care to 10 million children.

Nothing is more ludicrous than the argument that SCHIP is a step towards socialized medicine. We have heard them say it time after time. But

SCHIP is a block grant program to the States where most SCHIP recipients receive their coverage by private, managed care plans, similar to the private Medicare Advantage plans the Republicans have been promoting for the last 5 years.

The argument that SCHIP is too costly rings hollow. After all, remember, there are 98 Republican opponents of SCHIP who voted for a more expensive unfunded Medicare prescription drug program, which the President happily signed into law.

Five years of SCHIP expansion would cost little more than a month of the Iraq war, and SCHIP is paid for, unlike the President's war that is all borrowed money. The President's opposition, if wrong headed, is at least consistent. His budget proposal for 2008 underfunded SCHIP. It would have cut coverage for 800,000 children currently in the program.

He drug his feet on SCHIP as Governor of Texas, and his home State still has the highest percentage of uninsured children in the country. Of course, his tendency to ignore inconvenient facts or make up his own is well documented.

What I find inexplicable is the decision of House Republicans to follow the President's leadership down this path of denial and deceit. This bill is about more than health care for 10 million children. It could mark a turning point in the future of politics and health care reform in America.

If Bush and his GOP supporters are allowed to kill this bipartisan compromised legislation without severe consequences, meaningful health care reform and progress will be delayed for years. We must lay the foundation for accountability at the ballot box, because the message will be clear.

This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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Progress would be possible only with a new visionary president and a Congress that will listen.

I still hold out hope that this Congress will listen to the support of 70 percent of the American public, the support of 16 Republican governors and the bipartisan support in the Senate, that will convince a sufficient number of House Republicans to overturn this cruel veto and provide 10 million children with needed health care.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 10 a.m. today.

Accordingly (at 9 o'clock and 7 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess until 10 a.m.

□ 1000

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mrs. TAUSCHER) at 10 a.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer: O God of peace and Lord of Light, be present in the midst of Congress this day. May the issues that are discussed in committee work and on the floor of this Chamber bring forth enlightened truth that will lead to defined laws and solid policies so to guide and protect Your people.

Since this work is undertaken for the good of this Nation, assure justice, engender hope, and bring this society into a greater union that will give You glory both now and forever. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House her approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. BARRETT) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has agreed to a concurrent resolution of the following title in

which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. Con. Res. 36. Concurrent resolution supporting the goals and ideals of National Teen Driver Safety Week.

COMBAT TROOPS TAX RELIEF ACT

(Ms. GIFFORDS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. GIFFORDS. Madam Speaker, last week, I introduced the Combat Troops Tax Relief Act. From Fort Huachuca in Arizona to Iraq and Afghanistan, members of our armed services make the defense of our great Nation their number one priority. With unflinching honor and dedication, our military families inspire us by sending their husbands and their wives and their sons and daughters off to war to protect our freedoms.

My bill calls on Congress to honor their patriotism and commitment to the military families with more than rhetoric. This bill would give them concrete tax relief. This Congress is setting new priorities, including policies impacting military families. This bill does more by cutting taxes for middle-class military families. It increases the standard tax deduction for our soldiers and protects military families' eligibility for the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Care Tax Credit.

Military families in southern Arizona and across the country deserve nothing less.

SCHIP SHOULD BE ABOUT THE CHILDREN

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, we need to reauthorize the State Children's Health Insurance Program so children from low-income families without health insurance can get it. That is why my Republican colleagues and I remain supportive of a program and funding that will do just that. Unfortunately, the current SCHIP bill would send precious health care dollars to cover adults, illegal aliens, some children from families that are not low income, and others that have private insurance.

Republicans remain committed to putting children first. We want to provide the funds necessary to cover eligible children and enroll the low-income children still not covered. President Ronald Reagan foresaw this diversion of funds. He once said, "You know, we could say the Democrats spend their money like drunken sailors, but that would be unfair to drunken sailors. It would be unfair because the sailors are spending their own money."

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September the 11th.

HOUSE REPUBLICANS HAVE TWO CHIP PLANS BEFORE THEM—THEY HAVE TO DECIDE THIS WEEK

(Mr. SIREs asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. SIREs. Madam Speaker, this week, Republicans must decide if they're going to support a bipartisan bill that provides health care for 4 million more children or if they're going to back a Bush administration plan that will leave 800,000 more children uninsured.

Today, the Children's Health Insurance Program ensures that 6 million children have access to private health insurance.

Earlier this year, President Bush proposed increasing CHIP funding by \$5 billion over the next 5 years. The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office concluded that this plan will result in 800,000 children losing their health coverage.

The President's proposal is unacceptable to many of us. Our bipartisan compromise bill allows us not only to insure all the children currently in this program, but also allows us to cover an additional 4 million children who are already eligible but not enrolled in CHIP.

Madam Speaker, House Republicans have a decision to make. I hope they stand up for 10 million children to help us override the President's veto.

SCHIP BILL

(Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, instead of the reauthorization of a successful plan, the majority party is trying to reinvent the government health care wheel by proposing a \$35 billion expansion of the current SCHIP plan.

The current SCHIP plan has proven itself successful because it now provides approximately 6.6 million low-income children with government-funded health care services annually. By the way, only 13 percent of this money will actually go to children anyway.

If we allow the vetoed SCHIP bill to pass, the intent of the original SCHIP program, which is to provide health care insurance to children of low-income families who are unable to afford private coverage, will be lost.

This bill would allow families earning an annual income \$33,000 a year to take advantage of a program designed to help low-income, uninsured children.

Voting against the SCHIP bill reflects a disagreement for the manner in which the health care coverage will be distributed and to whom. The SCHIP bill needs to be authorized, but can be and should be done in a fiscally responsible manner.

I will vote to sustain the President's veto for this bill because it will overlook the children it was first intended for.