

Washington, DC - This afternoon the House passed HR 2, the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) Reauthorization bill. The legislation renews and improves the program, reauthorizing it for four and a half years through FY 2013. It ensures that the 7 million children currently receiving coverage continue to do so while also extending coverage to an additional 4 million uninsured children who are currently eligible for benefits but are not receiving coverage due to limited funding for the program.

The program's cost is primarily covered by a \$0.61 per pack of cigarettes increase in the tobacco tax, a measure that will discourage youth smoking. It is estimated there are nearly 1.5 million uninsured children in Texas, the highest of any state in the country.

The legislation passed the House by a vote of 289-139.

Congressman Charlie Gonzalez (TX-20) issued the following statement hailing the legislation's passage:

"In the midst of these tough economic times, the investment we've made today in our children's health could not be more important. This bill's unprecedented amount of support underlines the significance of this legislation and Congress's commitment to addressing the healthcare crisis in America."

"I'm proud to have cast this vote on behalf of the 11 million American children from working families, particularly the disproportionate number of whom are Texans, who are currently living without health care. We must now build on this accomplishment and work together to increase access to quality, affordable healthcare for all Americans and their families."

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