

**Washington, DC** - Congressman Gonzalez issued the following on the President's veto of a bill that would've provided health insurance for millions of low income American children. In his statement, Gonzalez sets the record straight on the bill and calls on President Bush and his allies to stand up for what's right for our nation's children by supporting this bill.

“By vetoing a historic bill that provided health insurance for millions of American children, the President is exacerbating the existing health care crisis in our country at a time when we should be working hard to solve it. He's also finding himself at odds with a bipartisan group of lawmakers and sadly, millions of hard working families that cannot afford health insurance for their children.

First, let me debunk myth and misinformation. The bill did not create a government run health care system. In reality, it's actually private doctors who administer care via managed care providers. In Texas, 100% of the children enrolled in SCHIP receive their coverage through such third parties.

This bill did not give handouts to families who could already afford health care for their children. Rather, this legislation sought to cover those who are currently without benefits due to insufficient federal funding to insure those who are eligible.

The bill would not have led to an onslaught of SCHIP enrollment with families abandoning their private plans; studies have already debunked this myth on many accounts. Opponents of this bill have exaggerated such claims while overlooking the fact that the small population who may be inclined to opt for SCHIP coverage over plans made available by their employers simply can't afford coverage otherwise. If we're serious about insuring children of the working poor, this SCHIP bill provided a legitimate solution.

And finally, this bill did nothing to existing surpluses of federal funds in states such as Texas. While this idea was being floated in earlier negotiations as a source for funding, the provision was ultimately eliminated from the compromise bill that was passed by overwhelmingly bipartisan majorities in the House and Senate.

When it comes to our kids, the State Children's Health Insurance Program is one of the most important programs of its kind. By providing low income families resources to give their children health insurance, we're laying the foundation for a healthy, productive generation of children who will soon be leading our country. At the same time, we're actually reducing overall public health costs. Healthier children ultimately mean healthier adults, and an early investment in our children's health prevents future, costlier expenses that occur when the uninsured are frequently forced to seek emergency care. The results are lower public health costs across the nation.

For too long, SCHIP was only available to a portion of those eligible for benefits. Federal funding was limited and as a result, millions of American children whose families couldn't afford health care but made "too much" to receive Medicaid were denied health care benefits. This legislation could have closed the gap between those who are eligible and those who actually received benefits by boosting funding for the program.

The bill, while not perfect, fundamentally addressed one of our nation's biggest public health problems. Hundreds of lawmakers in Washington from both sides of the aisle, including some staunch conservative leaders from the Republican Party, have come out and supported this legislation. 43 of our nation's 50 Governors, 16 of which are Republicans, are also behind this measure. And most importantly, the American public had voiced their support loud and clear.

As an elected official charged with representing the best interests of my constituents, I'm proud to say that I've supported a plan to give health insurance to our nation's children from day one.

As Congress prepares for a crucial vote to override the President's veto, I urge the President and his allies to stand for what's right for our nation's children by supporting this bipartisan measure."