



The United States Conference of Mayors

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Mayors Express Frustration over President Bush's Veto of SCHIP Legislation

Call for a Real Commitment to America's Children

Washington, DC – The United States Conference of Mayors, led by President and Trenton, NJ Mayor Douglas H. Palmer, today expressed shock and disbelief at President Bush's refusal to sign \$35 billion for the State Children's Health Insurance Program known as SCHIP. With his action, 10 million children in America and their families will be denied insurance protection.

"We are extremely disappointed because this is no more than a political move that ultimately hurts the children, the future of America," said Mayor Palmer. "No child in our nation should be without insurance. While the government is laying out billions of dollars to fund the war in Iraq, it is imperative that the Administration recognizes the need to also take care of its people at home."

The Conference also criticized President Bush's attempts to portray the bill as a "philosophical divide" between Republicans and Democrats. "The SCHIP bill is a bipartisan effort of both the House and the Senate that is critical to children who don't have health insurance. There should be no room for politics when it comes to the health of our children who are the future of our country," Palmer continued.

"Given what we know about the connections between good health and an individual's success in school, in the workforce, and as a parent, it makes no economic sense to deprive low-income children of medical care when they need it or to consign them to the emergency room for illnesses that could have been prevented. As a matter of policy – and morality – this veto is an embarrassment to our nation."

The Conference is also calling on Congress to override the veto.

"By all accounts, this measure would cover millions of children who currently fall through the cracks because either they can't afford insurance or their income is too high to qualify for Medicaid. With his veto, President Bush sends the message that children of this nation and their well-being don't matter. This contradicts the compassionate conservatism that the President pledged to the American people. The nation's mayors will continue to fight on behalf of our country's children," Palmer concluded.

The Poverty Task Force of the Conference of Mayors has consistently advocated for full funding of children's health insurance. A resolution calling for authorization and strengthening of the program is part of the Conference's legislative agenda known as the Mayor's 10 Point Plan, which was ratified by the USCM general body this past June.

Mayor Palmer is available for comment on this issue. Please call the numbers listed above.

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The U.S. Conference of Mayors is the official nonpartisan organization of cities with populations of 30,000 or more. There are 1,139 such cities in the country today, each represented in the Conference by its chief elected official, the Mayor.