

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4305

October 11, 2007

Majority Leader Harry Reid  
United States Senate  
S-221 U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

Speaker Nancy Pelosi  
House of Representatives  
H-232 U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid and Speaker Pelosi:

Ten years ago a Republican-led Congress created the State Children's Health Insurance Program to help low-income children obtain the health care they need. This was the original goal and should remain the goal today.

I'm urging you now to work with the President and Republicans in Congress to reach a bipartisan SCHIP reauthorization.

By any standard, SCHIP has been a remarkable success and helped millions of low-income children receive health care that they otherwise would go without. Moreover, until this year, SCHIP has been a truly bipartisan program and a bipartisan success.

Yet, instead of re-authorizing SCHIP with a needed funding increase aimed at enrolling those children who are eligible under the intended criteria, the Democratic majority in Congress, under your leadership, has proposed a far-reaching and costly expansion of this program. You have advocated a 140 percent funding increase that would include tens of thousands of adults and families earning up to \$83,000 a year, which is 400 percent of the poverty level.

In contrast, Republicans such as myself have proposed a sensible, fiscally-responsible alternative to increase funding for SCHIP by 40 percent and ensure renewed focus on SCHIP's original intent. It also directly confronts a central problem facing Texas. Approximately 700,000 Texas children are currently eligible but not enrolled in either SCHIP or Medicaid. Kids First addresses this central problem by providing \$700 million for outreach and enrollment. In contrast, the Democratic plan contains only a token \$100 million over five years and 50 states for critical outreach efforts.

Clearly, there are significant differences between our two approaches to this critical issue, as indicated by the President's veto of your legislation earlier this month.

I hope, however, that every Member of Congress, regardless of party affiliation or political ideology, should be able to agree that providing health care for low-income children must be a top priority of this Congress.

It's for this reason that I am deeply troubled with recent statements and news reports indicating that you are refusing to negotiate and work in any way to find a reasonable compromise on this critical issue. In fact, an October 4 headline by the Associated Press stated very clearly, "Reid: No Compromise on Health Plan."

This followed an October 3 story by The Politico newspaper that reported the following: "[t]he reality is that the veto debate at this point is more about political theater and less about legislating or changing votes. It's highly unlikely any House Republican will turn 180 degrees and vote to override President Bush's veto, but nonetheless, Democrats have decided to draw out the issue for two more weeks, until they hold the veto override."

In fact, just today, CongressDaily reported that "Democrats and advocacy groups have been hammering vulnerable Republicans with ads highlighting their recent votes against the bill...."

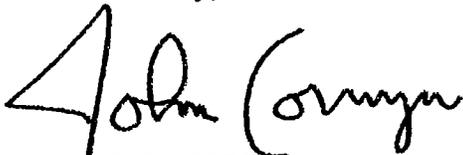
In contrast, the Los Angeles Times reported the following on October 7, "Bush Calls for Compromise on Children's Healthcare."

Therefore, I am troubled by the appearance that your refusal to negotiate is motivated more by partisan politics, with an eye toward next year's election, instead of a sincere desire to reach a bipartisan compromise that will help America's low-income children. I sincerely hope that is not the case.

If you believe that covering low-income children in Texas and across the country, requires more than the 40 percent funding increase that Republicans have introduced, I am more than willing to work with you to find a reasonable, bipartisan solution. But, reauthorization of SCHIP is too important to be used as a political pawn for campaign purposes.

I ask you to reconsider your decision to shutdown negotiations and urge you to work with Senators such as myself to reach a bipartisan SCHIP compromise that the President can sign into law immediately.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Cornyn". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "J".

JOHN CORNYN  
United States Senator