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## **FINANCE LEADERS LAUD OVERWHELMING SENATE PASSAGE OF VITAL CHILDREN'S HEALTH BILL BY 67-29 VOTE**

*Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act passes by veto-proof margin*

**Washington, D.C.** – Leaders of the Senate Finance Committee tonight applauded final and veto-proof Senate passage, 67-29, of the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) Reauthorization Act. CHIP provides health coverage to American children whose parents do not qualify for Medicaid, but can't afford private insurance. The bipartisan, bicameral agreement to renew CHIP will bring health coverage to approximately ten million children in need – preserving coverage for all 6.6 million children currently covered, and reaching millions more low-income, uninsured American children in the next five years. Finance Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.), Finance Ranking Republican Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), Health Subcommittee Chairman Jay Rockefeller (D-W.Va.), and Health Subcommittee Ranking Republican Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) were the chief architects of the final bill.

**“The Congress has done its job for America's kids. But this is not our victory. It is a victory for kids in my home state of Montana, and for kids across the country who need the Children's Health Insurance Program,”** said Baucus. **“As the President considers this legislation, I hope he thinks about the millions of American children who will continue to go without doctor's visits and needed medicines if he fails to sign this bill. There is still time for the President to open his heart and let children have this health coverage. With my colleagues on both sides of the aisle and of the Capitol, I urge the President to sign this bill.”**

**“The legislation gets the children's health insurance program back on track by making states enroll low-income children and cutting off adult coverage. About half the new money is just to keep the program running for the kids already on it. The rest goes to enroll more than 3 million new kids. The compromise bill we voted on today kept all the key provisions of the Senate bill, including a cap on new spending of \$35 billion. The legislation sunsets in five years. The support of 18 Senate Republicans for the bill is testament to the strength of the bill and the success of the program. A lot of misinformation has been spread about this bill. But in Iowa, you can't call a cow a chicken and have it be true,”** Grassley said. **“Along with keeping SCHIP going, Congress needs to pass tax incentives to help more low-income families get health insurance, and I'll be working on those policies this year with Republicans and Democrats in the United States Senate.”**

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**“For more than a decade, CHIP has been providing our nation’s children with necessary, and sometimes life-saving, healthcare. It’s vitally important that we continue to build off that success. The bill that passed today will do that, and allow us to reach millions more children,” Rockefeller said. “Unfortunately, the President is threatening to veto CHIP because he believes it covers too many children and is too expensive. The reality is that CHIP is the most cost-effective, public-private health insurance program ever. The President is squarely on the wrong side of the issue, and I’m prepared to keep sending this bill back to him again and again until he finally does the right thing for our children.”**

**“The CHIP program works for America’s children. Because of this legislation six million children are receiving the health care they need to become healthy, productive citizens. When something works we must do everything in our power to continue its success,” said Hatch. “The bill we voted on today is a good compromise that addresses viewpoints from both sides of the aisle in the Senate, and between the House and the Senate. If this bill passes and the President lets it stand, we can help four million more of our nation’s children. This is what it is all about – helping those who cannot help themselves.”**

The President has threatened repeatedly to veto the bipartisan, bicameral agreement to bring health care to millions of American children through the Children’s Health Insurance Program. The Senators said today that if the President does not change his mind, they will help to lead the effort to override that veto. A procedural vote in the Senate earlier today with all supporters present yielded 69 votes for the bill.

A summary of the legislation is available on the Finance Committee website at <http://finance.senate.gov/press/Bpress/2007press/prb092407.pdf>. Additional information is also available at <http://finance.senate.gov/press/Bpress/2007press/prb092507c.pdf>.

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