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House of Representatives

The House met at 9 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. LINCOLN DAVIS of Tennessee).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
October 16, 2007.

I hereby appoint the Honorable LINCOLN DAVIS to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2007, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 25 minutes and each Member, other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip, limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 9:50 a.m.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

SCHIP VETO

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, the vote to override President Bush's veto of SCHIP marks the culmination of the most disingenuous and deliberately misleading debate I have witnessed in my entire political career.

The partisan talking points from the Bush White House have been disputed not only by the independent experts, but by dozens of sensible Republicans like Senator GRASSLEY, Senator ROBERTS and Senator HATCH. The facts are

simple: working families are having great difficulty providing their children with health insurance.

This is not a program about poor kids, most of whom are already eligible for State Medicaid programs. SCHIP provides health care to children of working families who make too much to receive welfare, but can't afford private insurance. Everyone I talk to back home agrees that this is a problem government needs to address and that children of struggling working families shouldn't pay the price for Republican politics.

The President and his Republican defenders say that SCHIP shouldn't go to families who earn \$83,000 a year. Well, as Republican Senator GRASSLEY points out, this is why the bill doesn't authorize coverage at that income level.

The White House now opposes the bipartisan bill because it provides coverage for adults. Yet, over the last 6 years, the administration has cheerfully approved numerous waivers to allow States that have requested to extend coverage to some adults; for example, to pregnant women. This bill actually phases out adult coverage over 2 years, coverage the Bush White House used to think was a good idea, before they were against it.

We have heard complaints about the process, how Republicans were shut out of consideration of SCHIP reauthorization. Yet Commerce Committee Republicans wasted hour after hour demanding the bill be read line-by-line, aloud, instead of debating areas of concern and proposing their own amendments. Just because House Republicans chose to squander time with procedural games and stalling tactics is no justification for denying health care to 10 million children.

Nothing is more ludicrous than the argument that SCHIP is a step towards socialized medicine. We have heard them say it time after time. But

SCHIP is a block grant program to the States where most SCHIP recipients receive their coverage by private, managed care plans, similar to the private Medicare Advantage plans the Republicans have been promoting for the last 5 years.

The argument that SCHIP is too costly rings hollow. After all, remember, there are 98 Republican opponents of SCHIP who voted for a more expensive unfunded Medicare prescription drug program, which the President happily signed into law.

Five years of SCHIP expansion would cost little more than a month of the Iraq war, and SCHIP is paid for, unlike the President's war that is all borrowed money. The President's opposition, if wrong headed, is at least consistent. His budget proposal for 2008 underfunded SCHIP. It would have cut coverage for 800,000 children currently in the program.

He drug his feet on SCHIP as Governor of Texas, and his home State still has the highest percentage of uninsured children in the country. Of course, his tendency to ignore inconvenient facts or make up his own is well documented.

What I find inexplicable is the decision of House Republicans to follow the President's leadership down this path of denial and deceit. This bill is about more than health care for 10 million children. It could mark a turning point in the future of politics and health care reform in America.

If Bush and his GOP supporters are allowed to kill this bipartisan compromised legislation without severe consequences, meaningful health care reform and progress will be delayed for years. We must lay the foundation for accountability at the ballot box, because the message will be clear.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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