

Floor Statement, H.R. 3162 the CHAMP Act

Statement of Congressman John D. Dingell, Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce

FLOOR STATEMENT
OF
THE HONORABLE JOHN D. DINGELL
H.R. 3162, THE CHAMP ACT
August 1, 2007

The legislation before us accomplishes two critical goals. It will provide health care to as many as 12 million children. And it will allow our elderly to continue seeing their own doctors.

The CHAMP Act — the Children's Health and Medicare Protection Act — improves an existing and successful program created with bipartisan support in 1997. That program has cut the low-income uninsured rate by one-third. Some States have been able to insure as many as 60 percent of their children who previously had no health insurance. This bill is about taking care of our children; it's about taking care of the future of our country.

Today, six million children get their health care through this program. With this legislation, five million previously uninsured children will be able to see doctors, receive immunizations, get dental care, and other coverage. This legislation requires that children receive priority in coverage. It allows States to cover pregnant women, recognizing that healthy moms make for healthy babies.

While I am certain that my Republican colleagues on the Committee on Energy and Commerce understand this point — because our wonderful clerk read the bill to them — I will restate it for others listening: the CHAMP Act does not allow one Federal dime to be spent on illegal aliens. You will find this language in section 135 of the bill. Nor does the bill create a government-run health care system. Coverage under CHIP and Medicaid are provided primarily through private insurance — all but two States use some form of managed care for their programs. Nothing here would change that.

The CHAMP Act also secures Medicare for the future. This past Monday marked the 42nd anniversary of President Johnson signing Medicare into law. The CHAMP Act shores up the Medicare trust fund, improves benefits for seniors, and protects their ability to choose their own doctors. These reforms will effectively provide low-income seniors on Medicare with an additional \$1,200 in their pockets.

The CHAMP Act is an act of fiscal responsibility. This year, seniors in traditional Medicare will pay nearly three-quarters of a billion dollars in excess premiums to finance overpayments to HMOs. Those overpayments will accelerate the insolvency of the Medicare trust fund. The CHAMP Act adds three years to the life of the Trust Fund.

I am well aware that President Bush has pledged to veto counterpart legislation in the Senate that is much more modest in its ambitions, and I have received my own veto letter from the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. They stand on one side of the debate. Let's look at who stands on the other side: The American Medical Association. The American Academy of Pediatrics. The National Rural Health Association. The National Council on Aging. The AARP. The Federation of American Hospitals. The March of Dimes. The Children's Defense Fund. The NAACP. The National Governors Association, the Governors of New York, Michigan, California, Illinois, and Maryland,

and the Catholic Health Association -- which notes that "the most important pro-life thing the Congress can do right now is ensure that the State Children's Health Insurance Program is reauthorized."

If you are against this bill, you are in favor of depriving six million children of their healthcare. If you are against this bill, you are in favor of the plunder of the Medicare Trust Fund by private interests. If you are against this bill, you are in favor of denying seniors in Medicare additional benefits.

I urge all of my colleagues to stand up for what's right for children, seniors, people with disabilities, and taxpayers: support the speedy passage of the CHAMP Act.

Prepared by the Committee on Energy and Commerce
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