

Chairman Dingell at the Full Committee Markup of H.R. 20, H.R. 2295, H.R. 507, and H.R. 3162, the CHAMP Act

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

STATEMENT AT THE FULL COMMITTEE
MARKUP OF H.R. 20, H.R. 2295, H.R. 507, AND
H.R. 3162, THE CHAMP ACT
July 27, 2007

I have the briefest of opening statements, in the interest of moving to prompt consideration of legislation that will accomplish at least two critical goals: providing health care to up to 12 million children, and allowing our elderly to continue seeing their own doctors.

The CHAMP Act â€” the Childrenâ€™s Health and Medicare Protection Act â€” reauthorizes and improves the existing Children Health Insurance Program. This program, created with bipartisan support by this Committee in 1997, 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 coming Monday marks the 42nd anniversary of President Johnson signing Medicare into law. The CHAMP Act also strengthens Medicare by shoring up its trust fund, improving benefits for seniors, and protecting their ability to choose their own doctors. Low-income seniors on Medicare will receive assistance and benefits and other improvements that translate to an additional \$1,200 in their pockets.

The CHAMP Act also represents 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, if they are not stopped, will accelerate the insolvency of the Medicare trust fund by two years.

This legislation does much more than what I have described, and Members will certainly discuss and debate the additional provisions. I highlight the two goals I have previously mentioned to underscore the high stakes of the debate we are about to undertake.

I am well aware that President Bush has pledged to veto counterpart legislation passed by a Senate Committee that is much more modest in its ambitions. I further note that some of my Republican colleagues have professed a belated desire for a more lengthy process to produce a bipartisan consensus. I wish that such an outcome were possible, but given the Presidentâ€™s pledge to veto a solidly bipartisan legislative product in the Senate, we have little choice but to move forward in this manner, and I regret that they have apparently chosen to side with the Presidentâ€™s outrageous threat. Let me be clear: if we fail to pass this bill, six million children will lose their healthcare coverage as of October.

I want to congratulate our distinguished subcommittee chairman, Frank Pallone, for all of his hard work on this legislation. I urge all of my colleagues to join me in supporting the speedy passage of the CHAMP Act.

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Prepared by the Committee on Energy and Commerce
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