

## Dingell, Pallone Decry Republican Effort to Block Healthcare for Children and Seniors

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### NEWS RELEASE

Committee on Energy and Commerce

Rep. John D. Dingell, Chairman

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Energy & Commerce Leadership Calls on Republicans to Reauthorize CHIP, Strengthen Medicare

Washington, D.C. — Rep. John D. Dingell (D-MI), Chairman of the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and Rep. Frank Pallone (D-NJ), Chairman of the Subcommittee on Health, joined with Committee Democrats in denouncing Republican tactics aimed at delaying today's markup of H.R. 3162, the Children's Health and Medicare Protection Act (CHAMP Act).

At approximately 5:55 p.m., the Committee's Minority Members objected to dispensing with a reading of H.R. 3162, prompting the Chief Clerk to begin reading the full 465-page bill.

"It's shameful that Committee Republicans are devoting so much time and energy to block legislation aimed at helping the most vulnerable among us. By delaying today's markup of the CHAMP Act, Minority

Members have put the health of millions of Americans at risk," said Dingell. "It's shocking that Republicans are opposing legislation that would provide health care to up to 12 million children and ensure that seniors can continue to see their own doctors. I urge my Committee colleagues to stop playing partisan games and start putting the health of kids and seniors first."

This legislative package commits \$50 billion to reauthorize and improve the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and makes critical investments in Medicare to protect the health of senior citizens. CHIP was created with broad, bipartisan support and must be reauthorized by September 30. If Republicans continue to oppose legislation that reauthorizes this highly-successful program:

- The 6 million children enrolled in CHIP will lose health coverage;
- Millions of children won't get the preventative care they need and will likely receive care in a more costly environment - emergency rooms;
- Our healthcare safety net will become even more strained from the pressures of the uninsured; and
- More families will face bankruptcy and foreclosure due to medical debt.

"It's sad that Committee Republicans refuse to engage in a substantive discussion on the future of CHIP," Pallone said. "If Republicans were serious about strengthening this important children's health program, they would stop playing games and would allow a constructive markup to occur. These delaying tactics show that Republicans have no interest in ensuring our children have access to quality health care."

The CHAMP Act's Medicare provisions are designed to help low-income seniors afford healthcare coverage. The bill would ensure that Medicare beneficiaries, not HMOs, reap the program's benefits and also prevent a scheduled cut to physicians that treat Medicare patients.

Although President Bush highlighted his support for CHIP while running for re-election in 2004, he has threatened to veto Democrats' CHIP reauthorization legislation. Congressional Republicans are proposing to under-fund the program significantly, causing millions of children to lose coverage.

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