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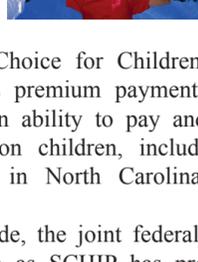
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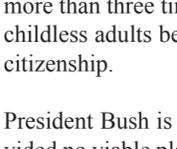
## House Approves Children's Health Care Again

While the House overwhelmingly approved a revised version of legislation that would ensure that 10 million uninsured children have access to health care, there still may not be enough votes to make it law.

The House voted 265 to 142 to reauthorize and expand the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). SCHIP, enacted in 1997, is designed to subsidize health coverage for families that earn too much to qualify for Medicaid but not enough to afford private insurance. Known in North Carolina as Health Choice for Children, the program requires premium payments and co-pays based on ability to pay and it protects 6.6 million children, including almost 200,000 in North Carolina.



During the past decade, the joint federal-state program known as SCHIP has provided millions of children with needed medical coverage, including some lifesaving procedures. In 2006, SCHIP covered 248,366 children in North Carolina. Still, 274,783 children remain uninsured. SCHIP reauthorization offers an opportunity to get many more of these children covered.



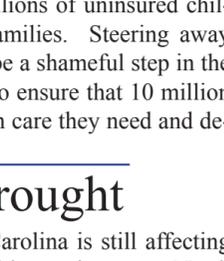
President Bush recently vetoed SCHIP reauthorization and the veto override was narrowly defeated in the House last week. It marked just the fourth veto of President Bush's two terms. This week's vote was still 15 votes short of what would be needed to override another veto by President Bush.

The legislation voted this week was revised to address a number of concerns. The revisions provide an explicit exclusion of families earning more than three times the federal poverty rate, a more rapid phase out of childless adults being covered and a more stringent process for proof of citizenship.

President Bush is adamantly opposed to SCHIP expansion, but has provided no viable plan to provide access to health care for children in families that earn too much to qualify for Medicaid but too little to buy private insurance.

One of the troubling false myths about the legislation is that benefits would be extended to illegal immigrants. The facts are that undocumented immigrants have never been eligible for Medicaid or SCHIP. The bill would require proof of citizenship before enrollment in SCHIP, similar to requirements for the Medicaid program.

Providing all children access to affordable, quality health care is not a political issue but moral imperative. Taking a hard line against SCHIP expansion is callous and potentially costly. Uninsured, sick children do receive medical attention, but too often this happens much later than it should through costly emergency room visits.



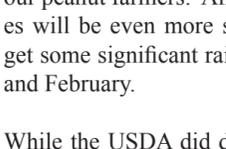
SCHIP provides much needed relief for the millions of uninsured children and their hard-working middle-income families. Steering away from what's already been accomplished would be a shameful step in the wrong direction. This is a historic opportunity to ensure that 10 million uninsured children will have the access to health care they need and deserve.

## North Carolina Drought

Despite the recent rain, the drought in North Carolina is still affecting the entire state. Some of the hardest hit communities are in eastern North Carolina.

Gov. Mike Easley came before the House Agriculture Committee this week to testify that the drought is the worst on record for the state and that it has already cost farmers hundreds of millions. Gov. Easley said that farmers need greater federal assistance to help deal with the estimated \$325 million in hay and row crop losses this year.

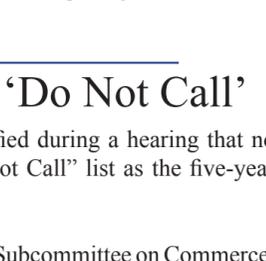
I had an opportunity to speak with Gov. Easley at the hearing, and I strongly support the efforts to assist our farmers. Agriculture is North Carolina's top industry, with an estimated impact of \$66 billion and a work force that includes nearly one in five employed North Carolinians. So far, 85 of the state's 100 counties have been declared federal disaster areas, while every county is in at least a severe drought.



I also took the opportunity to talk about North Carolina's drought on the House Floor this week. Next week, I will be touring several eastern North Carolina farms to talk with farmers and see the condition of their crops and livestock. Nearly three-quarters of North Carolina's 100 counties are experiencing an "exceptional" drought – the most severe category listed by the Drought Management Advisory Council. The Council also lists all of the remaining counties as experiencing at least "extreme" or "severe" drought conditions.

In many parts of my district, conditions are so dry that soil at the bottom of drainage ditches has started to crack and that the water in many streams and creeks has ceased to move. If North Carolina does not see significant rain, some areas face prospects of water rationing or potentially running out of water entirely.

At this point, some farmers will likely have to abandon their crops – particularly our peanut farmers. And, the consequences will be even more serious if we don't get some significant rainfall between now and February.



While the USDA did declare 85 of North Carolina's counties as disaster areas last month making farmers eligible for low-interest emergency loans, farmers still need more help.

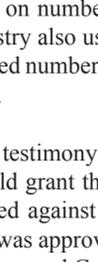
We're facing the kind of disaster that could push many farmers out of business and off their farms. Congress must move quickly to avoid worsening this natural disaster.

## Permanently Funding 'Do Not Call'

A Federal Trade Commission official testified during a hearing that no numbers will be removed from the "Do Not Call" list as the five-year deadline approaches.

FTC Director Lydia Parnes came before the Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade, and Consumer Protection of the Energy and Commerce Committee as we considered a bill to provide a permanent revenue source for Do Not Call. Parnes also testified that that no numbers will be dropped from the list until Congress decides if they want to make registration permanent, rather than require renewal every five years.

Current FTC rules state that numbers on the registry last for five years before they must be renewed. Because the registry started in 2003, the first people to have signed up are set to be cleared from the list in June 2008. Since its inception, more than 145 million Americans have signed up for the program, which is free and paid for by direct marketing companies.



Originally, the five-year limit was introduced to keep the registry up to date on numbers that had changed or been disconnected. However, the registry also uses a scrubbing program that purges disconnected or re-assigned numbers on a monthly basis rendering the five-year limit unnecessary.

The testimony came as the subcommittee considered H.R. 2601, which would grant the FTC permanent authority to charge the annual fees assessed against telemarketers to support the Do Not Call program. The bill was approved by the subcommittee and will be sent to the full House Energy and Commerce Committee for a vote.

I gave the following opening statement for the hearing:

Thank you Chairman Rush and Ranking Member Stearns for holding this important hearing on 'Enhancing FTC Consumer Protection in Financial Dealings with Telemarketers, and on the Internet.' I commend this Committee's leadership in assembling this timely hearing.

I would like to welcome Lydia Parnes who serves as Director of the Bureau of Consumer Protection at the Federal Trade Commission. I look forward to her testimony and appreciate the work she and the Commission are doing in order to safeguard Americans from predatory consumer practices.

The National Do Not Call registry has been widely successful and I was encouraged to learn that over 90 percent of American adults had heard of the registry and that over 75 percent had signed up for the free service. I am also pleased to learn that the enforcement mechanism has not gone overlooked. I commend the Commission in initiating nearly 30 cases where there have been near \$9 million in damages awarded.



The FTC has also stepped up efforts to educate Americans about online computer safety. They have established a website called OnGuardOnline.gov which includes tips, articles, quizzes, and videos which aim to educate consumers about spam and scam practices. Over four million people have visited the website in the past two years. I thank Ms. Parnes and her staff as well as the FTC as a whole for the work they do for the betterment of all Americans.

We'll also have the opportunity to mark up three important legislative items which will expand the authority of the Federal Trade Commission. They seek to (1) protect consumers against unfair and deceptive financial practices, (2) continue to implement the National Do Not Call Registry, and (3) continue to educate Americans about the potential dangers online. I support the three bills we are considering today and look forward to this subcommittee discharging them favorably.

Chairman Rush, I thank you for your work on this issue and look forward to working with you and the other Members of the Committee as these issues progress.

I yield back the balance of my time.

## Upcoming Veteran's Event in Goldsboro

I will be hosting the Military and Veterans Informational Resource Expo and Appreciation Awards Luncheon in Goldsboro on Saturday, November 3rd.

With nearly 780,000 veterans living in North Carolina, events like this are important to ensure that people know how to maximize all the benefits available to them. The event will also provide the needed opportunity for us as Americans to take a moment to show some deserved appreciation to our veterans and our men and women in uniform.



We have made some progress for veteran during this session of Congress. In fact, Congress has provided historic increases in veterans' health care and benefits, totaling nearly \$12 billion, to meet the needs of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, make up for the past shortchanging and to keep a proposed fee increase from hitting veterans.

The event will include presentations about veterans' benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Tri-care Service Center. Invited participants also include representatives from the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), American Veterans of World War II (AMVETS), Air Force, Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, National Guard, North Carolina Veterans Council, Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC), POW/MIA Committee, American Legion, Military Order of the Purple Heart, Vietnam Vets of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans, Marine Corps League and the Employment Security Commission.

The program will include the Presentation of Colors, music, welcoming remarks by Goldsboro Mayor Alfonso King, awards and a lunch with remarks by Lt. Gen. Lloyd Austin, III.

The event will be held at the Dillard-Goldsboro Alumni Cultural Center at 801 Poplar Street in Goldsboro. Registration for the event begins at 9:30 a.m. The event kicks off at 10 a.m. and closes at 2:30 p.m. The event is free and open to the public.



For more information or to pre-register for the event, please call 1-800-806-9745.