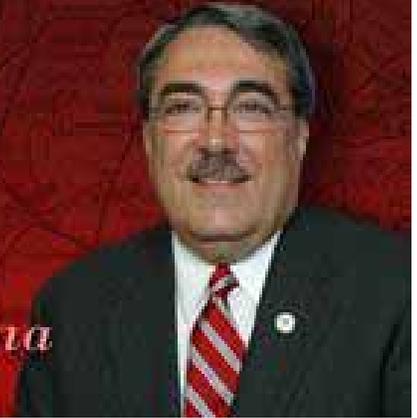




Congressman
G.K. BUTTERFIELD
1st District of North Carolina



Contact Information

•**Washington, DC**
 413 Cannon HOB
 Washington, DC 20515
 (202) 225-3101 Phone
 (202) 225-3354 Fax

•**Wilson Office**
 216 West Nash Street
 Suite B
 Wilson, NC 27893
 (252) 237-9816 Phone
 (252) 291-0356 Fax

•**Weldon Office**
 PO Box 836
 Weldon, NC 27890
 (252) 538-4123 Phone
 (252) 538-6516 Fax

•**Williamston Office**
 415 East Boulevard
 Suite 100
 Williamston, NC 27892
 (252) 789-4939 Phone
 (252) 792-8113 Fax

Healthcare for Children and Seniors

This week, legislation was filed to reauthorize the State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) needed to ensure millions of children receive healthcare and to protect Medicare for seniors. The Children’s Health and Medicare Protection Act provides strong and positive step in addressing the needs of the 47 million Americans who do not have health insurance.

During the past decade, the joint federal-state program known as SCHIP has provided million of children with needed medical coverage, including some lifesaving procedures. Last year, North Carolina had 247,991 children enrolled in SCHIP. The program is managed through the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services and local departments of social services make eligibility determinations.

Across the country, SCHIP covers about 6 million children from low-income families not poor enough to qualify for Medicaid. The program serves children from families with incomes of less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level.

The crisis of affordable health care continues to grow larger every day in our state and country. Programs like SCHIP still provide hope and vital medical services to those who need it the most during the formative years of life. The fact that 6.8 million children still lack coverage in the richest and most powerful country in the world is indefensible – especially because it does not reflect the will of the American people. Healthy kids learn more at school and are more likely to become productive members of society.

The plan provides hope for a healthier future for millions of uninsured children, and it provides for the federal, state and local governments to share the burden of taking care of these children.

If Congress fails to enact this legislation, there will be considerable consequences for children and seniors. Without SCHIP reauthorization by September 30th, 2007, millions of children could lose their health insurance. It would also mean that many seniors would lose access to their current physicians and pay higher Medicare premiums.

Highlights of Children’s Health and Medicare Protection Act:

- Reauthorizes SCHIP and expands health coverage to millions of low-income children.
- Ensures seniors’ access to the doctors of their choice by stopping a 10% payment cut to doctors.

- Encourages seniors to seek preventive health check-ups by eliminating co-payments and deductibles.
- Protects low-income seniors by expanding and improving programs to ensure Medicare remains affordable for those with lower incomes.
- Ensure seniors in rural areas continue to have access to Medicare and the doctors they know and trust.
- Shores up Medicare’s finances by extending the solvency of the Medicare Trust Fund by two years.

The CHAMP Act was considered by the House Committee on Energy and Commerce. As a member of that committee, I made the following statement:

Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you and Chairman Pallone for your leadership on this important issue.

I also thank you for giving me the opportunity to play a small part in the development of this legislation – legislation that will guarantee that all uninsured poor children in America will be covered.

There are 12 million poor children in America who qualify for SCHIP. 6 million are currently enrolled; more than 6 million are not enrolled. The CHAMP Act seeks to guarantee that these children get what many other families take for granted – basic health insurance.

I have said to my Democratic colleagues and now say to my friends across the aisle, I represent the 15th poorest district in this country. Nearly 50% of the children who reside in my district are eligible for SCHIP. And so I am proud to assert myself in this debate and proud to help assure that every child in America is covered.



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One of my great disappointments in this Congress is our failure to escalate the debate on issues surrounding poverty. One out of eight children in America lives in poverty! That should not be. We have the moral obligation to enable all low income children to have access to quality health care.

Some of you suggest that we are inappropriately increasing our spending and that we are increasing the nation's debt. How disappointing is this argument. We are spending huge amounts of money in the unnecessary War in Iraq – we are constantly providing tax relief to rich citizens and American corporations. Why not invest in healthy children?

We have a painful, but necessary, way of paying for this additional coverage. I represent a tobacco producing district in North Carolina that will carry a disproportionate share of the revenue support for this program. I also represent a district where the incidence of tobacco addiction is extremely high. To pay for this program by imposing a regressive tax on these individuals is of concern.

But Mr. Chairman, given the totality of the circumstances surrounding this issue, I am confident that we have good legislation that should be reported favorably.

House Bars Permanent Presence in Iraq

The House voted 399 to 24 to prohibit Congress from providing funds to establish permanent U.S. Armed Forces military installations in Iraq. The legislation also bars Congress from providing funds “to exercise United States economic control of the oil resources of Iraq.”

The bill, H.R. 2929, aims at helping to make it clear that the United States has no intention of an “open-ended” presence in Iraq and that America or any designs on controlling the Iraq’s oil riches. It’s a clear statement supporting the goals of handing over responsibility for security and public safety the Iraqi people. It also helps to ensure that the Administration cannot keep a decades-long troop garrison in Iraq, similar to the tens of thousands of U.S. troops stationed in South Korea since the Korean War.

At this point, it is clear that continued open-ended military action is not in the best interest of the United States of America, the Iraqi people or the Persian Gulf Region. We need to turn Iraq over to the Iraqis. All Iraqis

must know that Iraq is free and that the U.S. will not be an occupying force.

The brave men and women of our armed forces have accomplished everything asked of them and they have completed all that is possible militarily in Iraq. There is an intractable problem on the ground in Iraq. The tensions between the sectarian groups are centuries old and our presence is exacerbating the tensions. It is no longer a military problem, but one of politics and diplomacy. Our original goals in Iraq have been accomplished and it is time to begin bringing home the men and women who have fought so hard for us.

This is another important step toward bringing our troops home, and the House may also consider two additional Iraq-related bills as soon as next week. One bill insist that troops be given sufficient time at home between combat tours and the other requires much closer oversight of defense and reconstruction contracts to prevent war profiteering.

Perquimans River Gains Federal Attention

This week I filed legislation to study designating the Perquimans River as a National Wild and Scenic River.

This federal program recognizes, protects provides resources to important free-flowing waterways, like the Perquimans River. The historic Perquimans River is a remarkable habitat for hundreds wildlife species and it providing a unique outdoor experiences for North Carolinians.

National Wild and Scenic Rivers designation would protect the character and quality of this precious resource. This 30-mile river and the creeks that feed it are home to immense diversity of plant and animal life, including bald cypress trees, catfish, large-mouth and striped bass, blue crab and bald eagles.

The bill was co-sponsored by fellow North Carolina Congressmen Brad Miller, David Price, Mel Watt, Heath Schuler and Mike McIntyre.

The study process typically takes about three years to complete. National Park Service (NPS) staff work closely with state and local governments, river conservation groups and other concerned constituencies to form an advisory committee. This team guides the study process, determines whether the river meets the criteria for designation and develops a conservation plan to protect the river's free-flowing character.

If the river is found to be eligible and suitable the study teams join with local members of Congress to draft legislation that would ultimately lead to the river's designation in the National Wild and Scenic Riv-

ers System.

If the river is designated, it would prohibit federally licensed dams, bar federal water resource agency projects that diminish the river’s value, ensure water quality is maintained and authorize funding to manage the river. The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act designation would not grant federal authority over private land use or local zoning, nor would it dictate what land-owners do with their private property.

The study of the Perquimans River for “Wild & Scenic Rivers” designation has the strong support of the Perquimans County Board of Commissioners, Albemarle Regional Health Services and numerous local groups including the Perquimans County Restoration Association and Osprey Yacht Club.

The benefits of Wild and Scenic River Studies are numerous, even if designation does not occur. The study process provides sustained staff support and a modest budget for conservation work. New and valuable information about the rivers’ resources is also collected and made available for local use. The study also helps unite communities and state governments as they tackle regional water quality, flow protection, recreation management, and land conservation issues. Finally, whether or not the river is designated, the conservation plan prepared during the study period can help guide decisions by agencies, local governments, conservation organizations and landowners as they work to protect a valued community resource.



House Approves Farm Bill Extension

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The far-reaching bill, H.R. 2419, determines how the government will fund many food and nutrition programs across for the next five years. The bill covers the food-stamp program that aids poor families; land conservation; nutrition programs in public schools; farm subsidies; and rural development, research and energy programs.

The bill focuses on getting vital benefits to family farmers, investing in America's producers, stimulating rural economies and securing renewable energy resources. The bill also includes key rural economic development provisions nationwide, including increased access to high-speed broadband

The bill offers significant improvements to the Food Stamp Program, 1890 land-grant institutions and improved access to programs for socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers, including language to address outstanding claims from *Pigford v. Veneman*.

Part of the bill will be funded with revenue generated from cracking down on foreign companies that use tax loopholes to avoid paying taxes that every American-owned business must pay. This overseas tax haven loophole allows some foreign companies to avoid paying billions of dollars in taxes. In fact, the President's 2008 budget suggests that some foreign companies are "inappropriately" avoiding taxes by using this loophole.

The current farm law expires September 30th. The Senate is due to begin its consideration of the legislation in September.

Key Farm Bill Provisions

- **Protects Family Farmers and Agriculture:**

Imposes real payment limitations that will save more than a half billion dollars, and redirect funds to the people who need it most: working family farmers;

Invests in programs supporting fruit and vegetable producers who have not received traditional Farm Bill benefits;

Improves funding and access to conservation programs that take environmentally sensitive land out of farming and encourage environmentally friendly practices on working farmland;

Prevents the closure or relocation of any Farm Service Agency (FSA) office for a period of one full year following the enactment of the overall bill.



- **Meets Our Growing Nutrition Needs:**

Indexes Food Stamps to the cost of living;

Lifts the \$175 dependent child care cap in Food Stamps so families can deduct all their childcare expenses;

Creates a \$10 million-a-year grant program for states to develop tactics for reducing childhood obesity;

Clarifies the authority for school districts to buy produce from local farmers for school lunch programs.



- **Increases Funding for Historically Black Colleges and Universities:**

Raises the minimum funding level for Evens-Allen for 1890's research;

Raises the minimum funding level for 1890's extension.

- **Encourages Renewable Fuel Production:**

Provides loan guarantees for the development of refineries that process renewable fuels – a key step toward bringing more renewable fuels to market in America.

- **Improved Access for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers:**

Allows deserving *Pigford* claimants an opportunity to have their cases heard to redress civil rights abuses against Black farmers;

Mandatory funding for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Outreach Program.

Effort to End Suffering in Darfur Continues

Following up on a bipartisan Congressional Delegation trip to Sudan in April, I joined nine House colleagues on a trip to the United Nations this week to urge officials to take immediate action to address the genocide in Darfur.

Everyone on the trip to Sudan was deeply affected by what they saw and this is part of our commitment to convincing the international community to take quick and decisive action that ends the suffering in Sudan.

Our group met with Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, Under Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Jean-Marie Guéhenno, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Zalmay Khalilzad, and the Permanent Representatives to the United Nations from China and Egypt. The 10-member delegation was led by House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer and included fellow North Carolina Congressman Brad Miller. It was the same Congressional group that visited Sudan in April.

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I appreciate the UN's four-pronged approach to addressing the crisis in Darfur, which focuses on reaching a political resolution, continued humanitarian assistance, institution of a robust peacekeeping force and enhanced development aid. Still there is deep concern about the continuing violence and the regularity of attacks on humanitarian workers. It's an urgent crisis that must be addressed with stronger action.

The delegation discussed the need to bolster the current African Union forces on the ground, which continue to be under-manned and under-equipped, and have not been paid since February.

I was encouraged to hear Ban Ki-Moon say that resolving the humanitarian crisis in Sudan remains his top priority and that resolving this horrific, sustained conflict is critical to maintaining the UN's relevance in today's world.

We pressed the Chinese officials on the need to exert more leadership and to abandon the notion that "this is just a simple matter of economics – when the economy improves, the problems will just go away."

The House has already passed resolutions this year calling on China to increase its efforts to stop the genocide in Darfur and calling on the League of Arab States to acknowledge the genocide and to increase efforts to stop this atrocity. I will continue to push passage of the "Darfur Accountability and Divestment Act," which seeks to use U.S. economic leverage to address the crisis in Darfur.



In April, our same delegation traveled to El Fasher, in North Darfur. While there, they visited El Salaam Internally Displaced Persons Camp, and met with the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) Force Commander, Major General Luke Aprezi, at AMIS Headquarters. The delegation also met with United Nations (UN) officials working on the ground, including the UN Mission in Sudan, and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

I saw tens of thousands of Sudanese refugees in the camps where people live in straw huts and rely on the support of humanitarian aid from the U.S. and non-governmental organizations.

The crisis in Darfur began in 2003 when two rebel groups emerged to challenge the National Congress Party (NCP) government in Darfur. The conflict has led to a major humanitarian disaster, with an estimated 2 million people displaced, more than 234,000 people forced into neighboring Chad, and an estimated 450,000 people killed.

House Bolsters Local Law Enforcement

The House this week approved the FY 2008 Commerce-Justice-Science Appropriations, H.R. 3093, which provides funding for the Department of Justice and Department of Commerce as well as more than a dozen related federal agencies.

The legislation provides enormous resources to state and local law enforcement. From 2001 to 2006, federal support for state and local law enforcement was cut by 42%. This legislation reverses that trend to provide strong support for state and local law enforcement in several key areas:

- **Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS)** Adds \$183 million above last year's level to bolster local community policing efforts, expands DNA analysis and forensic crime lab capacity to combat the growing problem of methamphetamines.
- **Byrne Justice Assistance Grants** Provides \$600 million for grants to support state and local drug treatment programs, technology improvements, community corrections programs, prosecution and court program, and prevention and education programs.



- **State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP)** The bill provides \$408 million to assist state and local governments with the costs of jailing undocumented immigrants who have committed crimes not related to their immigration status.
- **Juvenile Justice** The bill provides \$400 million for juvenile justice programs – \$62 million over last year. This includes funding for competitive youth mentoring grants and delinquency prevention grants.
- **Violence Against Women** Adds \$48 million above last year's funding to help reduce violence against women, and to strengthen services to victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking.

