

October 18, 2007

WASHINGTON, DC—Congressman Peter DeFazio (D-Springfield) today voted to override President Bush's veto of H.R. 976, bipartisan legislation to reauthorize the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). The SCHIP bill would protect the existing health care coverage for 6.6 million children and extend coverage to 3.8 million additional children who are currently uninsured. The bill would extend coverage to an additional 36,000 children in Oregon alone. The override failed by 15 votes.

H.R. 976 would increase funding for SCHIP by \$35 billion over five years. The bill improves health care coverage providing dental coverage for all enrolled kids and provides mental health coverage on par with coverage for physical ailments.

President Bush vetoed the bill because he is ideologically opposed to extending health care to children through SCHIP. He has also complained the cost of the bill is too high. Instead, he argues the tax code should be changed to provide incentives for all families to shop for health care on their own. Yet, the annual cost of providing health care to 10 million children is equivalent to funding 41 days of the ongoing war in Iraq.

"Protecting the health of children is a moral obligation," Congressman DeFazio said. "These are the most vulnerable members of our society and it's shameful that so many lack basic health services. H.R. 976 is a good start toward providing health care security to all Americans."

DeFazio continued, "This bill is also good for taxpayers and our economy, because insuring kids means healthier kids, which improves their ability to get an adequate education and become productive members of society while also reducing the burden on taxpayers of paying for emergency room care for the uninsured, the most expensive place to get basic health care."