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SCHIP Call To Action

The PICO National Network, of which Greater Long Beach ICO is an affiliate, has issued a national call to action to save the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). A \$35 billion extension of this national program, which would extend health insurance coverage to 4 million children of working families, was recently vetoed by President Bush. The U.S. House and Senate have scheduled override votes for October 18. All ICO member congregations are asked to call their federal legislators and/or write or sign letters and urge them to stand with the kids and override the veto.

5600 Linden Avenue
Long Beach, CA 90805

***Tell your legislators to support health care for kids! Call the PICO Cover all Children Legislative Hotline to be connected to your state and federal representatives
1-866-633-6432***

Cover All Kids

On October 3, President Bush vetoed the proposed reauthorization of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). This legislation would have provided health care coverage to 4 million uninsured children while preserving coverage for another 6 million. On October 18, the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives will vote on whether or not to override the President's veto.

Greater Long Beach ICO is urging our member congregations to join the PICO National Network in a Compassion Sabbath/Sunday this weekend and pray that our elected officials find the courage to put aside politics and do right by our children. Parishioners are urged to call their Congressperson using PICO's toll-free hotline at **1-866-633-6432** and tell him or her to vote **YES** to override the veto.

The \$35 million SCHIP reauthorization legislation passed both Houses of Congress with strong bi-partisan support. Locally, our elected representatives supported the bill except for 46th District Congressman Dana Rohrabacher despite his assurances of support given to ICO leaders when we visited him last Spring.

In vetoing the bill, President Bush claimed that the legislation did things that it in fact does not do. In fact, the legislation:

- **Does Not** expand health care coverage to adults or families earning more than \$80,000 per year. The legislation caps coverage at 300 percent of poverty, and more than 9 out of 10 children in SCHIP are in low-income families earning less than \$41,000.
- **Does Not** undermine the private insurance system or pave the way for socialized medicine, but preserves and extends coverage for children who cannot afford increasingly unavailable and expensive private insurance.
- **Does Not** extend government-funded health care to undocumented immigrants, but requires states to document citizenship.

The reauthorization does call for an increase in the federal tobacco tax, much as tobacco tax revenue was used to create SCHIP in 1997. Tobacco taxes are a proven deterrent to youth smoking. Raising the tax will prevent 1.1 million kids from taking up smoking and save state \$25 billion in unnecessary medical costs.

In California, SCHIP funding supports the Healthy Families program. Tens of thousands of children across the state are in danger of losing health coverage if SCHIP is not reauthorized.

ICO is asking all our members to contact their representatives to stand with the kids and override the President's veto. We are also asking our members who live in U.S. Rep. Dana Rohrabacher's district either to contact him yourself through the PICO legislative hotline, or to sign a letter we are drafting and hope to have available to sign after Sunday services.

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