

January 14, 2009

(Washington, D.C.) -- U.S. Congressman Jason Altmire (PA-04) today voted for legislation that will provide 11 million American children with the health insurance they need and deserve. The State Children Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) Reauthorization Bill (H.R. 2) extends health care coverage to four million kids who are currently uninsured and qualify for SCHIP, while also ensuring that the seven million kids currently covered by SCHIP will continue to get quality care. This legislation is fully paid for and will add nothing to the national debt. The bill passed by a vote of 289-139.

During the last Congress, President Bush twice vetoed legislation that would have expanded health insurance coverage for children, despite the fact that this legislation enjoyed wide, bipartisan support.

**“With rising unemployment, more and more parents are struggling to pay for the health insurance their kids need to stay healthy. This legislation will help millions of American families provide their children with the health care they need and deserve,” Altmire said. “Strong bipartisan coalitions in the last Congress tried to extend health insurance coverage for children but President Bush repeatedly stood in our way. I am glad that this year, our expansion of SCHIP will be signed into law and millions of Americans kids will now have the health care coverage they need to grow into strong, healthy adults.”**

This bill also includes strong accountability measures. It explicitly states that no illegal immigrants will receive benefits under SCHIP. Additionally, it requires that SCHIP beneficiaries document their citizenship and identity to be eligible for coverage.

Established in 1997, SCHIP is a public-private partnership which provides health insurance to children in families that earn too much to qualify for Medicaid but not enough to pay for private health insurance. It has proven to be a successful and cost-effective way to provide health care.