



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Malcolm Smith

State Senate Democrats Lobby Congress For Override Of Children's Health Care Veto By President Bush

MALCOLM A. SMITH October 15, 2007

State Senate Democratic Leader Malcolm A. Smith (D-St. Albans) and several colleagues from the Democratic Conference today visited members of Congress in Washington D.C. seeking their pledge to override President Bush's callous veto of a joint federal-state health insurance program.

Earlier this month, Bush vetoed a bipartisan Congressional measure to reauthorize the State Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), which was due to expire on September 30.

New York State has counted on the funding to fulfill a planned extension of health insurance coverage to the 400,000 kids in New York who currently lack it, a provision of the 2007-08 State Budget.

"To those in Congress who voted against SCHIP when it was first taken up, we ask that you change your position," said Smith. "Of all causes to do the President's bidding, gambling with our children's health care should never be one of them."

Smith specifically named Republican New York Congressmen Thomas M. Reynolds and Randy Kuhl, both of whom voted against the SCHIP bill in September. An override vote is

scheduled for October 18, and Smith said he hopes to convince as many members of the House as he can to challenge Bush's assault on children's health care.

Though the SCHIP reauthorization had passed the Senate by a veto-proof majority, twenty-four votes are needed in the House of Representatives to muster a successful override.

Senator Kevin Parker (D-Brooklyn) said: "Here is a case where if we can change a few people's minds, we can make a difference in the lives of thousands of children in New York and in several other states that have advanced progressive legislation to expand health care."

Senator Ruth Hassell-Thompson (D-Mount Vernon) said: "Though we are formally scheduled to meet with members of New York's Congressional delegation as well as other key Congressional leaders, I know I will take the time to speak to whoever will listen about just how critical SCHIP funding is to the lives of thousands of children."

This week's visit was the Senate Democrats' second trip to Washington, D.C. in recent months. The current gathering follows a series of meetings Senate Democrats had in June with members of New York's Congressional delegation and several other key Democratic elected leaders to hammer out an agenda rooted in shared goals.

"It is unfortunate that while Albany remains in a state of legislative paralysis, those of us seeking real progress have had to turn to our nation's Capital in order to achieve real results for New York State," Smith said. "It is time for Albany legislators to get back to work so that New York can be a place where families live, grow and thrive."

On Thursday, Senate Democrats launched a campaign urging a return to session on October 22 so that the Legislature can act on important measures like paid family leave, judicial pay

raises and property tax rebates for seniors.

In addition to SCHIP, the coalition of 17 State Senate Democrats visiting Washington today also plan to advocate for additional Homeland Security investments and reforms to shield borrowers from predatory mortgage lending practices during their two-day visit with elected leaders in Washington, D.C.

New York State Senators David Valesky (D-Oneida), Bill Perkins (D-Harlem) and Eric Schneiderman (D-Manhattan) also participated in efforts to advocate for SCHIP.