

**August 01, 2007**

**WASHINGTON** -- In an effort to continue his commitment to protecting seniors and opposing big tax increases, U.S. Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R-Fla.) voted to oppose legislation today that would have done both, while expanding the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) well beyond its scope to include adults and illegal immigrants.

"I support providing the best possible health care to our nation's neediest children," said Bilirakis. "This bill instead chooses to raise our taxes and cut Medicare for more than 45,000 of my constituents to pay for an SCHIP expansion that goes well beyond the program's original intent. The bill also opens the door to illegal immigrants tapping into yet another government program."

The Children's Health and Medicare Protection "CHAMP" Act of 2007 (H.R. 3162) takes the SCHIP program and increases its funding by \$160 billion over ten years, expands the program to include adults up to 21 years of age and fails to require recipients to demonstrate their citizenship in order to receive the benefit.

"This bill pits low-income children in need of health insurance against low-income seniors while granting a massive tax increase to expand government bureaucracy. No one wins with this combination," said Bilirakis. "Simply put, the CHAMP Act represents a missed opportunity to expand SCHIP in a focused manner to help provide health care to our nation's neediest kids."

H.R. 3162 proposes to pay for the massive SCHIP expansion by slashing \$193 billion from seniors' Medicare Advantage programs over a 10-year period and raising the highly regressive tobacco tax by \$60 billion. Despite these funding measures, the bill still leaves a \$73-billion gap inviting future tax hikes.

"We need to pass a clean bill that simply reauthorizes SCHIP without the over extended expansions, increases in regressive taxes and devastating cuts to Medicare - one of the largest in its history," said Bilirakis. "We also need to find an adequate long-term solution for physician payments. The CHAMP Act has woefully failed to meet these challenges."

Congressman Bilirakis voted for the Republican-sponsored Motion to Recommit, which proposed reauthorizing SCHIP without the tax hikes, cuts to Medicare, or loopholes for illegal immigrants and kept SCHIP focused solely on children in need - currently defined at 200% of the federal poverty level. Unfortunately, the motion failed on a party line vote.

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