

Congress OKs Expanded Kids' Health Care

by AP-News

WASHINGTON (AP) -- Setting up a veto fight with President Bush while handing Democrats another campaign issue, Congress passed legislation to expand a popular children's health program.

Eighteen Republicans in the Senate lined up with Democrats in voting 67-29 to increase spending on the State Children's Health Insurance Program, or SCHIP, from about \$5 billion to \$12 billion annually for the next five years.

Thursday's vote was enough to override a promised veto. Supporters in the House, however, which passed the bill Tuesday, are about two dozen votes shy of an override. Both chambers would have to muster two-thirds majorities to win a veto showdown.

Overall, spending for SCHIP would increase to \$60 billion over five years if the bill becomes law. That's double what Bush recommended.

Analysts projected the legislation would allow about 4 million of the estimated 9 million uninsured children in the United States to gain coverage.

Bush and many GOP lawmakers say the spending increase is too large and would expand the program beyond its original intent. That intent was to help families with incomes too large to qualify for Medicaid but not enough to afford private insurance.

In a statement after the Senate vote, the White House said Bush "will veto this bill because it directs scarce funding to higher incomes at the expense of poor families."

Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., responded that "With each passing day, he reveals ever more clearly that the values of his administration are out of touch with those of average Americans."

The bill is HR 976.

Copyright © 2007 The Associated Press. All rights reserved.

Presented by InsuranceHeadlines.com

Congress OKs Expanded Kids' Health Care by AP-News