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OPINION POLL: NINE IN 10 VOTERS WANT SCHIP REAUTHORIZED

Majority support adding funds to expand program

Washington, DC – A new poll released today by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation shows that Americans overwhelmingly support the State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), which provides states with federal funds to design health insurance programs for vulnerable children.

Nearly nine in 10 voters (86%) say they support reauthorizing SCHIP, with a clear majority (63%) saying they support expanding SCHIP’s budget by an additional \$35 billion over five years.

Earlier this month, both the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate approved separate SCHIP bills that would expand the program to cover more SCHIP-eligible children. President Bush has threatened to veto legislation that expands the program. SCHIP provides health insurance coverage for more than 6 million children whose parents earn too much to qualify for Medicaid, yet not enough to afford private health insurance. Despite the success of the program, Census figures show there are nearly 9 million uninsured children in America, with most living with parents who work, but earn modest incomes.

The poll released today – conducted by noted Republican pollster Bill McInturff – shows strong endorsement for increasing SCHIP’s funding.

“This poll shows that voters of all political stripes recognize the value of SCHIP for keeping America’s kids healthy,” said Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, MD, MBA, president and CEO of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. “The message is clear: Americans want SCHIP renewed and strengthened. Most uninsured children are already eligible for SCHIP, but they do not participate because of insufficient funding or enrollment barriers. Congress and the White House now have the opportunity to give millions of vulnerable children the health coverage they need in order to thrive and succeed. Without more support for SCHIP, millions of kids will remain uninsured.”

Poll results show:

Voters support SCHIP.

- An overwhelming majority of voters support reauthorizing SCHIP for another five years (86% support).
- Voters support reauthorization regardless of political party, with 77 percent of Republicans, 86 percent of Independents and 93 percent of Democrats supporting reauthorization.

Voters support SCHIP reauthorization, even when told the cost of covering kids who are already enrolled.

- More than three out of four voters support reauthorization, even when told that the Congressional Budget Office says it will cost \$39 billion over five years to maintain the program in its current state (77% support).
- Even when these costs are explained, support for reauthorization remains strong across voters from different political parties (Republicans – 64% support; Independents – 78% support; Democrats – 86% support).

Voters support expanding SCHIP by an *additional* \$35 billion in order to cover 4 million more children who are eligible for the program, but not currently enrolled.

- Nearly two out of three voters say they support expanding SCHIP to cover an additional 4 million uninsured children at an additional cost of \$35 billion over five years (63% support).

- This expansion of SCHIP is even supported by a majority of self-identified ‘conservatives.’ (Conservatives – 53% support; Moderates – 67% support; Liberals – 73% support)

Voters disagree with President Bush’s threat to veto legislation that expands SCHIP.

- Nearly two out of three voters say they disagree with President Bush’s decision to veto legislation passed by Congress to expand SCHIP (64% disagree).
- Even half of self-identified ‘conservatives’ say they disagree with President Bush’s decision. (Conservatives – 50% disagree; Moderates – 68% disagree; Liberals – 86% disagree).

The national survey of 900 registered, likely voters was conducted Aug. 4-7, 2007, by Public Opinion Strategies, Alexandria, Va. The sample was drawn proportional to the voting-age population in each state. The margin of error is $\pm 3.27\%$.

Full survey results are available online at <http://covertheuninsured.org/research/survey0807/>.

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