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## Frelinghuysen pressured to override veto

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WASHINGTON -- As the House gears up for a vote Thursday to override President Bush's veto of a \$35 billion expansion of a children's health insurance program, advocates are turning up the pressure on three New Jersey Republicans who voted no when Congress approved the measure in late September.

Democratic lawmakers and their allies want Reps. Jim Saxton, R-Mount Holly; Scott Garrett, R-Wantage; and Rodney Frelinghuysen, R-Morristown, to help override Bush's Oct. 3 veto of a measure aimed at renewing and expanding the State Children's Health Insurance Program.

New Jersey lawmakers are urging the three congressmen to vote to override the veto.

Nationwide, a coalition of labor unions and activist groups, including the AFL-CIO and MoveOn.org, have run ads targeting more than a dozen House Republicans to get them to change their votes. Additionally, a faith-based coalition called the PICO National Network is calling on congregations in 40 cities to pray Sunday for a veto override and is urging its members to call Congress.

However, the tactics may be futile in New Jersey because Saxton, Garrett and Frelinghuysen have indicated they won't budge.

"The congressman has been hearing from people on both sides of the debate. He has weighed their arguments carefully and continues to believe that the Democrats' multibillion expansion of SCHIP is not in the best interest of the people of New Jersey," Garrett's spokeswoman, Mary MacLean, said in an e-mail Friday.

Saxton, who voted for SCHIP when Congress set up the program a decade ago, said the expansion proposal is a step toward socialized medicine and lower quality of care. Stressing that he supports expanding SCHIP at a more modest level, Saxton has said he won't bend to political pressure to override the veto.

Frelinghuysen, whose office didn't respond to telephone calls or e-mails for this article, said in a statement last month Congress' SCHIP proposal is fiscally unsound.

Democrats say it's wrong of Bush to seek \$190 billion for the Iraq war but veto \$35 billion to keep children healthy.

"Members on both sides of the aisle need to send a message back to the president and demonstrate to the American people the importance of providing children with adequate health care coverage far outweighs partisan politics," Rep. Rob Andrews, D-Haddon Heights, said in a statement earlier this month.

Bush favors renewing SCHIP -- which has been temporarily extended until mid-November -- and adding \$5 billion to it over five years on top of its operating budget of \$25 billion over the same period.

The Senate may have the two-thirds majority to override the veto; the Senate voted 67-29 for the \$35 billion in late September. The House vote, also in late September, was 265-159. If all 432 members are present and voting, 288 of them must vote yes for the override.

Supporters say the \$35 billion expansion, paid for by raising the federal tobacco tax, would allow SCHIP to cover 4 million additional children on top of the 6 million people, mostly kids, who are currently enrolled.

New Jersey Policy Perspective, a liberal think tank, released a study showing that about 63,000 Garden State children could lose coverage if Bush's proposal becomes law.

Bush proposes to limit future enrollment to children from homes that earn double the poverty level income, or \$41,300 for a family of four. NJ FamilyCare, which administers the state's SCHIP program, enrolls kids from families earning up to \$72,275 a year, or three and half times the poverty level.

Currently, NJ FamilyCare enrolls 207,000 people -- 124,000 children and 83,000 adults.

SCHIP pays 65 percent of the money NJ FamilyCare uses to insure kids from families that earn too much to qualify for Medicaid, the government-funded insurance program for the poor and disabled but too little to afford private policies.

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