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EDITORIAL

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## Our view: Override SCHIP veto

Weldon and Feeney should put the health of children over politics

Last week, President Bush said tough luck to lower-income children.

He did it by vetoing a bipartisan compromise to spend \$35 billion over the next five years to give more children access to health care.

Under the expansion, the State Children's Health Insurance Program would add four million children to state programs such as Florida's KidCare, for working poor families who earn too much to qualify for Medicaid, but can't afford expensive private coverage.

The bill passed with solid majorities in both the House and Senate, winning the support of stalwart conservatives like Sen. Orin Hatch, R-Utah, and Sen. Charles Grassley, R-Iowa.

Grassley rightly pointed out that Bush's plan to increase the program by only \$5 billion over five years wouldn't even cover the number of children already in the program.

The expansion is desperately needed in Florida, where 658,000 children are uninsured. As many as 47 percent of those kids could gain health coverage under the new SCHIP. That includes an estimated 7,500 uninsured children in Brevard.

But while the Senate has the votes to override Bush's veto, that's not the case in the House, where some lawmakers-- including Space Coast GOP Reps. Dave Weldon and Tom Feeney -- continue to spin shameless lies about SCHIP.

Here's some of what they say:

- The expansion would give free health care to families that don't need the help.

Not true.

Parents pay fees for children's coverage on a sliding scale.

One Brevard County family earning 200 percent of the poverty level pays \$20 per month for KidCare coverage, along with co-pays for doctors visits and prescriptions.

That's according to Janice Everson, a member of Congregations for Community Action in Melbourne, a faith-based group that advocates for children.

Some states, such as New York, have asked for waivers to extend SCHIP coverage to families earning up to four times the poverty level, but the Bush administration nixed the proposal.

Florida limits eligibility for KidCare to families earning 200 percent of the poverty level or less, and that's unlikely to change.

- Expanding SCHIP is part of plot by Democrats to "federalize" all health care.

That's nonsense.

Children enrolled in the program get care through private providers, such as HMOs.

And it's an irony.

If federally subsidized health care is an evil first step towards "socialized" medicine, why aren't members of Congress such as Weldon and Feeney -- who earn \$165,200 a year and are eligible for taxpayer-subsidized health insurance -- decrying that handout?

- The expansion will break the federal bank.

Again, more falsehoods.

While the \$35 billion five-year boost is significant, keep in mind the U.S. is spending \$12 billion a month on the misguided war in Iraq.

Bush said Saturday he's willing to compromise and put "a little more" funding into the SCHIP budget, but we have no confidence he considers health care for poor children a priority.

If Feeney, Weldon, and other naysayers in the House do, they can salvage the bill --and put kids' health above politics -- by helping to override the White House veto in a vote scheduled for Oct. 18.