

LARSON PRAISES WAYS AND MEANS PASSAGE OF CHILDREN'S HEALTH, MEDICARE BILL

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Includes long-term care hospital provisions championed by Larson

WASHINGTON – U.S. Congressman John B. Larson (CT-1) last night participated in the markup and passage of the Children's Health and Medicare Protection Act (H.R. 3162) in the House Ways and Means Committee. Also known as the CHAMP Act, the bill reauthorizes the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) and will provide health care to 11 million children. In Connecticut, it will protect the coverage of 23,100 children enrolled in the HUSKY program with the option to expand coverage to an additional 46,200 children. The bill also enhances and protects the Medicare program for seniors. The Committee passed the bill by a 24 to 17 vote.

Larson joined with fellow Ways and Means Committee member Congressman Earl Pomeroy (D-ND) to work extensively with the Committee to include provisions of the Medicare Long-Term Care Patient Safety and Improvement Act of 2007 (H.R. 3057). These provisions will amend policies by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) that sought to cut Medicare reimbursements to long-term care hospitals. The legislation will enhance patient quality of care and protect patient access to long-term care hospitals.

Larson stated, "I'm pleased to have worked with Congressman Pomeroy to protect patients' access to long-term care facilities. These common sense measures will not only improve quality of care but will provide savings to Medicare."

Specifically, the CHAMP Act:

- Reauthorizes the State Children's Health Insurance Program set to expire on September 30, 2007, and expands health coverage to millions more low-income children.
- Reverses efforts to privatize Medicare by reducing overpayments to private plans.
- Preserves access to health care by stopping a 10% physician payment cut and providing doctors with positive updates for the next two years.

- Encourages seniors to seek preventive health benefits by eliminating co-payments and deductibles.
- Improves access to mental health services and physical, occupational and speech therapies.
- Protects low-income seniors by expanding and improving programs to ensure Medicare remains affordable for those with lower incomes.

“This bill is a combination of good health policy and good tax policy,” stated Larson. “Today this committee approved legislation that will help some of our most vulnerable citizens: children and seniors.”

The House Energy and Commerce Committee, which shares jurisdiction on this bill with the Ways and Means Committee, is also considering the CHAMP Act this week.

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