

October 16, 2007

Dear Member of the Florida Delegation:

Very soon you will be casting critical votes affecting the health and well-being of people in Florida. As Florida community and faith leaders, service providers, and advocates for meeting human needs, we strongly urge you to vote to invest in healthy children, educated workers, and secure families and seniors.

First, 232,000 uninsured children in Florida urgently need you to vote to override the President's veto of the SCHIP bill (Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act, H.R. 976). These children and all the others who are now healthier because of SCHIP are depending on your vote. Our children cannot learn and thrive if they do not get the health care they need. We will look to your vote to override the SCHIP veto as a true demonstration of your commitment to our state's children.

You will also be voting soon on vital domestic appropriations bills. Please support investments in services that provide our people with opportunity and protect them from harm. The choices before you are stark. We hope the appropriations bills headed towards completion will preserve or expand:

- Head Start, child care, and education from birth through college;
- job training and employment services so our youth and adult workers can get ahead;
- community health centers, maternal and child health services, rural health, and mental health programs;
- services to address family violence, juvenile justice, and the prevention of child abuse or neglect;
- nutrition help for children (Women, Infants and Children (WIC) food program) and the elderly (Commodity Supplemental Food Program);
- services to strengthen communities through the Community Services Block Grant; and
- affordable housing and home energy assistance to provide stability for low-income seniors, people with disabilities, and families.

Vetoes threatened by the President are aimed at cutting these services. We strongly urge you to vote for domestic appropriations bills including Labor-HHS-Education, Transportation-HUD, Commerce-Justice-Science, and Agriculture, and to override such destructive vetoes.

So much is at stake for Florida. The President wants to force appropriations back down to levels that would for the seventh year in a row cut services for Florida's communities and families. Instead, your votes should invest in Florida's future. The House-passed appropriations bill would allow 845 more children in Florida to receive Head Start than under the President's plan. Similarly, House appropriations would provide funds for 369 more teachers than the President's plan, and would allow \$124 more special education funding for each child with disabilities in Florida. We hope the House version of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is adopted. In marked contrast, despite soaring energy prices, a veto could mean 11,200 fewer Florida households will get the help they need to pay their utilities in 2008 than in 2001.

Our neighbors, our children, and the communities we live in and serve all count on you to vote for critically important investments and to reject the cuts the President's vetoes would require. We believe these votes – for SCHIP and human needs appropriations – are among the most important you will cast.

Sincerely,

Benedictine Order of St. John the Beloved, Port St. Lucie
Business and Professional Women's Clubs of Florida

Central Florida Movement for a Democratic Society, Sanford
 Claretian Missionary Sisters, Mayo
 CodePink, Sarasota
 CodePink Florida
 CodePink Orlando
 CodePink, Tallahassee
 Early Childhood Association of Florida
 Easter Seals, Daytona Beach
 Farmworker Association of Florida
 Florida Academy of Family Physicians
 Florida ACORN
 Florida CHAIN (Community Health Action Information Network)
 Florida Consumer Action Network
 Florida Council for Exceptional Children
 Florida Council of Churches
 Florida For Peace
 Florida Impact
 Florida Legal Services
 Franciscan Mission Service, St. Petersburg
 GrandFamilies of Central Florida
 Health Care Center for the Homeless, Maitland
 Helping Hands Ministry, Longwood
 Human Services Coalition, Miami
 IBEW, Lakeland
 IBEW 108, Seffner
 Justice and Peace Committee Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, N.Y., St. Petersburg
 Lakeside United Methodist Women, Lakeside United Methodist Church, Hypoluxo
 Miami Coalition for the Homeless, Inc.
 Movement for a Democratic Society, Kissimmee
 National Council of Jewish Women, Florida State Public Affair
 Orlando Progressive Alliance
 Pax Christi Northeast Florida
 Peace & Justice Office of Diocese of Venice
 RESULTS, Miami
 St. Anastasia Catholic Church, St. Augustine
 SURE-Sarasota United for Responsibility and Equity
 TEAM-Tallahassee Equality Action Ministry
 The Children's Forum, Inc., Tallahassee
 United Methodist Women, Lake Worth
 United Methodist Women, Palm Beach Gardens
 United Methodist Women, Jupiter
 United Way of Northeast Florida
 University of Florida WIC Program
 Whole Child Project Manatee, Bradenton