

October 16, 2007

Dear Member of the Georgia Delegation:

Very soon you will be casting critical votes affecting the health and well-being of people in Georgia. As Georgia 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, 161,000 uninsured children in Georgia 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 Georgia. The President wants to force appropriations back down to levels that would for the seventh year in a row cut services for Georgia's communities and families. Instead, your votes should invest in Georgia's future. The House-passed appropriations bill would allow 560 more children in Georgia to receive Head Start than under the President's plan. Similarly, House appropriations would provide funds for 319 more teachers than the President's plan, and would allow \$143 more special education funding for each child with disabilities in Georgia. 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 21,400 fewer Georgia 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,

9to5, Atlanta Working Women
American Friends Service Committee, Southeast Region

Athens Regional Medical Center
Bowen Homes Residents Association, Atlanta
Central City AIDS Network, Inc., Macon
Concerted Services, Child Development Program, Waycross
Dawson Democrats, Dawsonville
Dream House Outreach Ministries, Stone Mountain
Dream House Outreach Ministries, Clarkston
Easter Seals Southern Georgia
Fulton County Human Services Department
Georgia Association of Homes and Services for Children
Georgia Rural Urban Summit
Hispanic Concerns Committee, Athens
Hodge Memorial Day Care Center, Savannah
Homeless Coalition of Northeast Georgia
International Womens House, Decatur
Metro-Atlanta Task Force for the Homeless
National Farmworker Jobs Program, Statesboro
National Farmworker Jobs Program, Mount Vernon
Pax Christi, Athens
Pax Christi South, Young Harris
Planned Parenthood of Georgia
Rainbow/Push, Decatur
Saint Joseph's Mercy Care Services, Inc., Atlanta
Spirit of Oneness, Inc., Dunwoody