

October 16, 2007

Dear Member of the Virginia Delegation:

Very soon you will be casting critical votes affecting the health and well-being of people in Virginia. As Virginia 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, 74,200 uninsured children in Virginia 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 Virginia. The President wants to force appropriations back down to levels that would for the seventh year in a row cut services for Virginia's communities and families. Instead, your votes should invest in Virginia's future. The House-passed appropriations bill would allow 326 more children in Virginia to receive Head Start than under the President's plan. Similarly, House appropriations would provide funds for 141 more teachers than the President's plan, and would allow \$111 more special education funding for each child with disabilities in Virginia. 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 25,000 fewer Virginia 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,

Blue Ridge Independent Living Center, Roanoke
Bon Secours Health System, Norfolk
Cardinal Forest Elementary PTA, Springfield
Care Connection for Children, Norfolk
Central Virginia Health Planning Agency, Chester
Charlottesville RESULTS
CHIP of Virginia
Christian Psychotherapy, Chesapeake
Community Independent Action Coalition, Petersburg
Consortium for Infant and Child Health (CINCH), Norfolk
Crater AIDS Action Program, Petersburg
Crittenden Middle School PTA, Newport News
Disabled Action Committee, Dale City
East Point Association, Onancock
Epilepsy Foundation of Virginia
Independence Empowerment Center, Manassas
Institute of Social Medicine and Community Health, Great Falls
Junction Center for Independent Living, Inc., Norton
Just Faith, Chantilly
Mary Immaculate Hospital, Newport News
Mid-Atlantic Juvenile Defender Center, Richmond
National Association of Secondary School Principals, Reston
National Head Start Association, Arlington
New River Community Action, Inc., Radford
Olde Towne Medical Center, Williamsburg
Our Lady Queen of Peace, Arlington
Pax Christi, Arlington
Point O' View Elementary PTA, Virginia Beach
Portsmouth Community Health Center
Prevent Child Abuse Hampton Roads, Norfolk
Prevent Child Abuse Virginia, Richmond
Prevent Child Abuse Virginia, Glen Allen
RESULTS, Louise
Rotary Club International, Richmond
Safe Kids Coalition of Hampton Roads, Virginia Beach
Social Action Linking Together (SALT), Vienna
Square One, Virginia Beach
St. Joseph Catholic Church, Petersburg
Telamon Corporation, Richmond
The Arc of the Virginia Peninsula, Inc.
Three Rivers Healthy Families, West Point
United for Peace & Justice, Blacksburg
United Way of the Virginia Peninsula
Virginia Center on Aging
Virginia Dental Hygienists' Association
Virginia Guardianship Association
Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy
Virginia Nurses Association
Virginia Organizing Project

Virginia Poverty Law Center
Virginia PTA
Virginia Rural Health Association
Voices for Virginia's Children
Volunteers of America Chesapeake, Woodbridge
West End United Methodist Church, Chesapeake