



**Rodney Alexander** / Louisiana's 5th District  
THOUGHTS FROM THE HILL

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## **Holding the Line on SCHIP Reauthorization Pays Off for Children in Need**

Knowing how to compromise is a rare, but useful, skill among government officials.

In most cases, the only way to resolve an issue is for both sides to give a little, but there are always those exceptions when compromising is not an option.

Congressional leadership's repeated attempts to expand the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), potentially to the children of illegal aliens, adults, and children whose families can afford private insurance, and to pay for the expansion with an increased tax on cigarettes was undoubtedly a situation that called for digging in my heels.

This week, after months of efforts by the majority party to force an expansion – even after the President vetoed the bill in October and the House sustained his veto – the side that needed to buckle finally did.

On Wednesday, December 19, House leaders did what they likely knew they would have to do in the end – they brought to the floor a bill that included language to reauthorize and fully fund SCHIP through March 2009 without expanding or extending eligibility definitions beyond current guidelines.

While the bill provides additional funding needed to cover children currently eligible, the provisions to expand the program were finally removed; therefore, the tax hike on cigarettes was no longer necessary.

With increased funding, SCHIP can continue with the purpose for which it was created – to provide health insurance to children in low-income families who cannot afford private insurance, but make too much money to qualify for Medicaid. We can also move forward with educating more families about this program so that those who qualify but are not currently enrolled will sign up and begin receiving benefits for their children.

Several years ago, while serving as Chairman of the Health and Welfare Committee in the Louisiana State Legislature, I worked to launch the Louisiana Children's Health Insurance Program (LaCHIP), which receives funding from SCHIP.

Since that time, I have seen thousands of low-income families across Louisiana receive help from LaCHIP, and as a member the U.S. House of Representatives I have remained loyal to those families by working to keep the program focused on the children it was established to help.

After all, the health and well-being of our nation's children in need should never be compromised.

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