
U.S. Representative

John Spratt

South Carolina # 5th District

News Release

February 13, 2002, For Immediate Release

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Spratt Restores Funding for Pee Dee Healthy Start

WASHINGTON – U.S. Rep. John Spratt (D-SC) announced today that federal funding has been restored for Pee Dee Healthy Start, a program that combats infant mortality in six South Carolina counties. Spratt said Pee Dee will receive \$750,000 this year – welcome news for a program that was threatened with a total loss of funding in legislation before Congress in December.

“This is wonderful news given the current budget situation,” said Spratt, the Ranking Member on the House Budget Committee. “The President’s tax cut, the downturn in the economy, and the war on terrorism are unfortunately squeezing good programs like Pee Dee. I was pleased to have had a hand in getting the money restored.”

Healthy Start was conceived in 1991 as a community-based initiative to combat infant mortality. Pee Dee Healthy Start was one of fifteen federally funded demonstration sites and was one of only two rural sites funded. Pee Dee Healthy Start’s goal is to reduce infant mortality and negative pregnancy outcomes in Chesterfield, Darlington, Dillon, Marion, Marlboro and Williamsburg counties. To achieve this goal, the program combines services and creates a single place where women can go for a wide variety of pre-natal and post-partum needs.

“Pee Dee Healthy Start has been extraordinarily successful,” said Spratt. “In 1991, South Carolina’s infant mortality rate was 1.26 times higher than the national rate. By 1997, the six counties that make up the Pee Dee Healthy Start region showed a 35% decline in infant mortality in one year.”

Federal funding for the national Healthy Start program was reduced from \$105 million in fiscal year 1999 to \$90 million in fiscal year 2001. The decrease resulted in a loss of funding for many programs, including Pee Dee Healthy Start.

“When I learned of this,” said Spratt, “I contacted the ranking Democrat on the Appropriations Committee and asked him to add funding for these programs. He agreed to help, and in the end the House’s appropriation for the program was increased from \$90 million to \$102 million. The Senate chose to keep the funding the same level, \$90 million. When the two houses met to resolve differences, they settled on a compromise funding level of \$99 million.”

Spratt also said that he included a provision in the bill that gives future funding preference to Pee Dee and other successful Healthy Start programs.

“I am a big believer in Healthy Start,” said Spratt. “I am gratified to have played a part in getting more funding approved, and for making it easier for Pee Dee to be funded in the future.”

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