

WASHINGTON – U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell and the House passed an expansion of the State Children's Health Insurance Program, or SCHIP, today, setting the stage for 11 million American children to become eligible for health insurance coverage by 2013.

H.R. 2 passed the House with a strong, bipartisan 289 to 139 vote. President-elect Barack Obama is expected to sign the SCHIP legislation.

"There is no doubt that for Arizona's most vulnerable children, change is here," said Mitchell.

Mitchell said that especially in tough economic times, Congress has a moral responsibility to children. "Families should never be forced to choose between health care for their children and paying the bills," he said.

According to the Congressional Research Service, more than 104,000 Arizona children were enrolled in SCHIP in FY 2007. [Source: Congressional Research Service, March 12, 2008]

"We know the consequences when children don't receive adequate medical care," said Mitchell. "When children don't have adequate health care, a minor illness can turn into something more serious, and parents are forced to take their kids to the emergency room. As a former teacher, I know that sick children miss school and that often has a negative impact on how children perform in school."