

Dick Lugar

U.S. Senator for Indiana

Contact: Andy Fisher 202-224-2079 Date: 04/25/2007

<http://lugar.senate.gov> • senator_lugar@lugar.senate.gov • andy_fisher@lugar.senate.gov

Lugar Introduces Children's Express Lane to Health Coverage Bill

U.S. Sens. Dick Lugar (R-IN) and Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) today introduced *The Children's Express Lane to Improve Health Coverage and Program Integrity Act of 2007* that would increase health coverage for uninsured, low-income children and simplify state administrative processes, and reduce paperwork burdens for families and the government.

"Many children eligible for school lunches are also eligible to receive health care under the Children's Health Insurance Program. The difficulty comes when red tape and bureaucracy prevent the sharing of information between the two programs," Lugar said.

"It is important that we give states greater flexibility in the ways they can enroll uninsured children by eliminating duplicative multi-agency efforts to collect and verify income and resource eligibility," Lugar said.

Express Lane would give states the option of establishing that their Medicaid or State Children's Health Insurance Program (S-CHIP) financial eligibility rules are satisfied when a family presents proof that their child is already enrolled in another public program with comparable income guidelines. The bill does not affect other, non-income eligibility requirements and maintains existing quality control measures.

This bill could potentially reduce costs across a number of federal programs including: the National School Lunch Program, the Food Stamp Program, the Summer Feeding Program, and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC).

The bill would also enhance federal funding available for States to improve their information technology if it: reduces the number of people who are inaccurately granted eligibility; increases the number of people who receive coverage; or improves the efficiency of coverage.

Despite gains made in recent years, census data shows that nearly 8.3 million children in the United States remain uninsured. Most low-income uninsured children are enrolled in nutrition and related programs that operate under income guidelines similar to those of the Medicaid program. In 2002, more than 71 percent of low-income uninsured children were in families that received benefits through the food stamps program, the National School Lunch Program, or WIC.

Express Lane builds upon the Lugar-Carson Access to Children's Health Insurance Program Act, introduced by Lugar and Rep. Julia Carson (D-IN) to allow for greater use of school lunch participation records to identify eligible children. The bill encouraged greater cooperation among schools, childcare facilities and WIC clinics to enroll children eligible for Medicaid and S-CHIP. This bipartisan bill was included in the Agricultural Risk Protection Act of 2000 passed by Congress on May 25, 2000, and signed into law by the President.

Congress created the Children's Health Insurance Program in 1997 to provide essential health insurance coverage to low-income children.

###