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KENNEDY CALLS ON PRESIDENT BUSH TO GET CHILDREN THE HEALTH CARE THEY NEED

(As Prepared for Delivery)

It's a privilege to join my colleagues to support children's health. I commend too the former Assistant Surgeon General, Dr. Woodie Kessel for his courage in speaking out for children. He has worked tirelessly for children's health in Republican and Democratic Administrations alike – and he recognizes that a strong, bipartisan CHIP bill is the most important step we can take to improve the health of America's children.

We're here today to say there's no higher priority in America than our children. When we shortchange our children, we shortchange our future.

It's almost unimaginable that an American President could tell American parents that we can't afford health care for American children.

What the President is saying to parents is that it's more important to help children in Iraq than children in America.

This is a clear case of misplaced priorities, mistaken values and misguided morality. A veto of this bill is wrong and Americans will not tolerate it.

In just 41 days of war, we spend what is needed to cover the ten million children who would benefit from the bill before us today.

The Administration boasts of renovating clinics, training doctors, vaccinating children and improving access to care all over Iraq.

Those are commendable accomplishments, but we should show the same commitment to the health of our own children.

For the Bush Administration, improving health care for children in Iraq is an achievement. In America, it's a veto.

A bipartisan majority in Congress has made a judgment to stand up to the empty rhetoric and hollow slogans of the White House, and give all children in America get the healthy start in life they deserve. The United States Senate voted yesterday to go forward with action on our compromise bill.

Support for our proposal is so broad because CHIP isn't a Republican idea or a Democratic idea. It's not a state program or a federal initiative. It's not public sector or

private sector. It's all of those things, and more. CHIP is an American success story. And the children of America deserve to have that success continue.

We'll keep fighting for CHIP until the children of America get the health care that they deserve and that the American people are demanding.

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