



Statement by Rev. Bill Calhoun, PICO National Network, Denver, Colorado
United States Senate
August 2, 2007

I am Bill Calhoun. I serve the Montview Presbyterian Church in Denver. As part of the faith-based Metro Organizations for People, my congregation is helping to lead a grassroots effort to cover uninsured children in Colorado. I am proud to represent the 53 faith-based federations and 1,000 congregations that are part of PICO National Network.

I was here in March with 400 faith leaders from PICO to ask Congress to include \$50 billion in the budget for children's health. We are back today at this crucial moment to ask members of Congress from both parties to get the job done for our children.

I hold this picture of Bernadette a 14 year old Colorado girl who writes:

“My mom tried to better our family by earning more money and my brother and I lost our health care coverage. Now we share a doctor with many other kids in the emergency room. My mom is the hardest working single mom I know, but she still cannot afford to pay one emergency bill. We live in the richest country in the world and yet there are 9 million kids without health care coverage.”

In worship this past Sunday, the scheduled words from the Bible that I read included these words: If the child asks for an egg, will you give a scorpion? This question remains....today!

Please, please, please, please, please, may CONGRESS have COURAGE to CARE for CHILDREN.

We live in a time when some in Washington seem to fear that COURAGE to CARE for CHILDREN might take us in the wrong direction. Please, please, please, if we make this courageous move for children, America will once again find an American way to care for the least among us. But if we cannot make sure our children have health care, we have chosen profits over people and fear over faith. God help us! We need to move from fear to faith, from kinks fought over funding to kids finding the health that they need.

The media is full of the policy arguments on this issue. But people in my church and people of faith across the country see only one position – the immorality of 9 million American children without health care coverage. They see clearly the opportunity we have to bless our children with the chance to be healthy. America's governors – Democrats and Republicans alike – America's faith communities and 9 out of 10 Americans support covering our nation's uninsured children because we understand that is the right, the moral thing to do. Healthy kids succeed in school. Healthy kids strengthen the American social fabric.

This year PICO National Network and the broader faith community has made children's health our top priority

- In Colorado and four other states, PICO state networks have helped lead successful campaigns this year to pass legislation to reduce the number of uninsured children.
- We've held Town Hall meetings and prayer events on children's health in 40 cities
- We've generated tens out thousands of calls and letters to Congress in support of a strong \$50 billion SCHIP reauthorization
- Last month PICO helped bring together the leaders of 20 of the largest religious denominations and organizations in the nation to support a strong SCHIP Reauthorization

I say all this to emphasize that our energies boldly proclaim that this move for children is popular grounded in repeated local and state organizing efforts by people of faith.

We applaud the House of Representatives for passing legislation yesterday to provide health coverage to 5 million low-income children who would otherwise be uninsured.

Now it is time for the Senate to step up and pass bi-partisan legislation. The legislation before the Senate rightly focuses on the lowest-income children. Four out of the five of the children it reaches are already eligible for coverage. And it is paid for by an increase in tobacco taxes, which will save lives and save money. We pray that this legislation will get the support of all members of the United States Senate.

On recess next week, members of Congress will hear from the people of our nation that they want children healthy. We pray that the members of Congress will listen not to special interests but to the people!

The question for Congress comes down to which child we would ask to go without health coverage? Not Bernadette and not any child, we hope. We pray that the Senate and House will find a bipartisan agreement that says yes to our children. Friends, the faith communities of our nation are voting on this moral issue. We pray that you will vote with them.

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PICO is a national faith-based network of 1,000 religious congregations and 53 federations working since 1973 to improve communities and expand opportunities for working families in 150 cities and 17 states. For more information please visit www.piconetwork.org.