

# **GOP smears: Graeme Frost and the \$83,000 SCHIP family**

Art Levine  
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The primary talking points from the GOP on the SCHIP bill scheduled for a veto override vote this week are that many well-to-do middle-class families with private health insurance are getting coverage, rather than the the poor who deserve it. Those false claims were part of the smear effort that targeted 12-year-old Graeme Frost who received SCHIP's help to recover from a car accident that could have seen him die without medical care. You can see Graeme's parents tell the true story in this Keith Olberman interview. Some right-wingers and bloggers called to make death threats and urge that Frost and his family be "strung up."

Now, Georgetown University's Center for Children and Families has released the definitive rebuttal to these wild exaggerations and falsehoods by the Bush administration and its right-wing minions. But because the GOP spinmeisters don't care about facts when promoting their ideology, it's important for anyone living in the states with the 20 GOP congressmen who voted against children's health to contact them to let them hear your views, as detailed in this article. (Essentially, call toll-free at 1-800-828-0498 through Families USA to reach your legislator.)

Despite the GOP's myth-making, there isn't a single family in the entire U.S. receiving SCHIP help that gets anywhere near the \$83,000 claimed by the administration, and over 90 percent of the recipients earn less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level for a family of four -- exactly the people SCHIP is supposed to cover. As the center reports:

## **CCF Fact Sheet: \$83,000 SCHIP Family Doesn't Exist**

The truth about who's eligible for State Children's Health Insurance Program coverage has become blurred in the debate to reauthorize SCHIP, with the mythical \$83,000 SCHIP family making headlines. The misleading contention that SCHIP covers children at this income level leaves the false impression that SCHIP is a program that no longer focuses on lower income children or that SCHIP reauthorization would turn it into such a program.

The Georgetown University Center for Children and Families has released a fact sheet with new data on the income levels of the children participating in SCHIP. Here are the facts about who's enrolled in SCHIP:

- There currently are no children enrolled in SCHIP with family income of 400 percent of the federal poverty level (\$83,000 for a family of four).
- More than nine in 10 children (91.3 percent) enrolled in SCHIP are from families with incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty level (\$41,300 for a family of four).
- More than 99.95 percent of the children in SCHIP have income below or at 300 percent of the federal poverty level (\$62,000 for a family of four).

The SCHIP legislation, Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2007 (CHIPRA), approved by Congress but vetoed by the president would provide health coverage to nearly 4 million uninsured children -- reducing the number of uninsured children by nearly a half. The vast majority (84 percent) of these children are from the lowest-income families who already are eligible for SCHIP or Medicaid. The bill would not increase states' flexibility to expand coverage to families with more moderate incomes; in fact, CHIPRA would constrain that flexibility. CCF's fact sheet, Coverage of Uninsured Children in Moderate-Income Families Under SCHIP, and summary of the CHIPRA legislation are available online at <http://ccf.georgetown.edu/>.

Those are the facts. But facts don't mean much amid the political mud-slinging over SCHIP by the GOP, so that's why you need to register your views by contacting your

member of Congress through Family USA's Action Center , especially if you live in the district or state of one of the 20 members of Congress who oppose the SCHIP expansion. Here's the list again, and let them know your views:

If your Representative is on the following list, call today and urge him or her to vote YES for health insurance for children in low-income working families. And if you know people in those states, forward this email and ask your friends and colleagues who are constituents to make the call.

Use the toll-free number 1 800-828-0498 set up by Families USA to access the Capitol switchboard, which will connected you to your Representative's office.

#### Target List of Representatives

AL Robert Aderholt

AR John Boozman

CA Brian Bilbray

CA John Doolittle

CO Marilyn Musgrave

FL Gus Bilirakis

FL Ginny Brown-Waite

FL Tom Feeney

FL Rick Keller

IL Judy Biggert

IL Tim Johnson

IL Peter Roskam

IL Jerry Weller

LA Rodney Alexander

MI Joseph Knollenberg

MI Thaddeus McCotter

MI Tim Walberg

MN Michelle Bachman

MO Sam Graves

NJ Rodney Frelinghuysen

NJ Scott Garrett

NJ Jim Saxton

NY Randy Kuhl

OH Steve Chabot

OR Greg Walden

PA John Peterson

TX Kay Granger

VA Thelma Drake

VA Randy Forbes

Republicans Who Didn't Vote

CA Wally Herger

WY Barbara Cubin