



THE NAVAJO NATION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT

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CONTACT: SHERRICK S. ROANHORSE

EXECUTIVE STAFF ASSISTANT

SROANHORSE@OPVP.ORG

928.871.7001 OFFICE

928.255.2132 MOBILE

Navajo Vice President Ben Shelly thanks congressional representatives for remembering Natives in State Children's Health Insurance program

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation Vice President Ben Shelly has acknowledged members of the 111th Congress for including needed tribal citizenship documentation language in the reauthorization of the State Children's Health Insurance Program last week.

Congressman Ben Ray Lujan was a co-sponsor of the SCHIP reauthorization. Voting in support of moving it forward were U.S. Senators Jeff Bingaman and Tom Udall and Representatives Ann Kirkpatrick, Martin Heinrich, and Harry Teague.

"I extend my sincere appreciation to Congressman Lujan and his colleagues, Representatives Kirkpatrick, Heinrich, and Teague, as well as Senators Bingaman and Udall, for having the fortitude to help push needed health care legislation," Vice President Shelly said.

SCHIP is a federal program administered jointly with the states to provide health insurance to low-income, uninsured children. SCHIP is known as "KidsCare" in Arizona, "New MexiKids" in New Mexico, and "Utah CHIP" in Utah.

For more than two years, the Navajo Nation Division of Health, Navajo Nation Washington Office, and Vice President Shelly advocated for changes to citizenship documentation requirements through visits to Congress, the Navajo Nation's federal advocacy document, and involvement with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' Tribal Technical Advisement Group, of which he is a member.

According to the Navajo Nation Division of Health, approximately 85,000 Navajos use Medicaid through health care facilities on the Navajo Nation. Of these, 17,500 are Navajo elders and many of them do not have a birth certificate because they were born at home.

"The SCHIP reauthorization has become law, and I want to personally acknowledge efforts of Navajo Nation Division of Health Director Anslem Roanhorse and his staff, as well as work by the Navajo Nation Washington Office, for advocating for these needed changes," Vice President Shelly said. "Their efforts are commendable and will be appreciated by our people needing health insurance."

"Since 2005, many of our Navajo people who apply for Medicaid, especially elders with no state issued birth certificates, were burdened with U.S. citizenship documentation requirements," said Vice President Shelly. "Through humble actions by the new Congress and Obama-Biden administration, citizens eligible for Medicaid will be able to use their Certificate of Indian Blood as means to prove that they are indeed U.S. Citizens. Prior to this, many of our Navajo elders were burdened with paperwork requirements."

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– Navajo Nation Vice President Ben Shelly

The law will authorize funds to enroll an additional six million children and adults, increasing SCHIP coverage to 11 million people across the country.

"We must do all we can to assist our children and adults, to gain access to health insurance, especially those living in tough situations," Vice President Shelly said. "Our Navajo people face many barriers, including health care access and coverage, and with this law, many of our people with limited incomes will be one step closer to getting health insurance."

Provisions in the SCHIP reauthorization include authorizing \$100 million in new federal grants for SCHIP and Medicaid outreach and enrollment efforts among Native American communities, as well as allowing tribally-issued documents to be used as means to demonstrate U.S. citizenship.

According to the Navajo Nation Division of Health, some 85,000 Navajos use Medicaid through health care facilities on the Navajo Nation. Of these, 17,500 are Navajo elders, and many of them do not have a birth certificate because they were born at home.