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## **LANDMARK CHILDREN'S HEALTH BILL INTO LAW**

On February 4, Ways and Means Committee Chairman Charles B. Rangel (D-NY) joined President Obama at the White House to sign H.R. 2, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) Reauthorization Act, into law. The House approved the legislation earlier that Wednesday by a vote of 290-135.



*Congressman Rangel and other members of Congress  
join President Barack Obama at the White House SCHIP signing ceremony.*

The landmark, bipartisan legislation reauthorizes SCHIP for four years, protecting more than 650,000 low-income New York children already covered by the program while also expanding it to include an additional 267,000 children who would otherwise be uninsured.

"What a difference a President makes," said Ways and Means Committee Chairman Charles B. Rangel (D-NY). "President Obama and Congress are demonstrating that change has come to Washington, and we are moving forward to improve the quality of life for American families struggling during these hard times. I cannot think of a better investment than the health of our children. Extending the Children's Health Insurance Program is not only good policy; it is the right thing to do."

Enacted in 1997, SCHIP provides health insurance to children whose families have incomes too high to qualify for Medicaid but too low to afford private coverage. The renewal, which is paid for through an increase in the Federal tobacco tax, is expected to benefit as many as 11 million children nationwide. The new law also provides states the option of extending coverage to immigrant children who have been in the country legally for less than five years.

Click [here](#) for more information on this landmark legislation.

## **RANGEL STEERS RECOVERY DOLLARS TO NEW YORK**

As Congress moved one step closer to jumpstarting the nation's economy out of its current recession, New Yorkers can rest assured that economic relief is on the way thanks to the leadership of Congressman Charles Rangel.

The House of Representatives on January 28 successfully passed the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (HR1)* to provide tax relief to working families and businesses, create jobs and make critical investments in America's future by a vote of 244-188. The move comes less than a week after important provisions of the bill moved through Rangel's Ways and Means Committee by vote of 24-13.

"This package delivers real and practical relief to the hard working families of the city and the hundreds of small business that are the backbone of our economy," said Rangel, Chair of the House's Ways and Means Committee. "Its a package that puts more money in the hands of everyday Americans through tax cuts and extension of unemployment benefits. It provides states and cities with the money for long-needed improvements in our schools and public housing buildings, as well as for the kind of career assistance and job training that we ensure that everyone reaches their full potential, especially our disconnected youth and veterans."

Hearings in Washington and meetings with business, labor and other community leaders in New York and Washington at the end of 2008 and the beginning of 2009 helped to provide important input on provisions that would provide meaningful benefits to families and help businesses create jobs.

## **WHAT THE RECOVERY PACKAGE MEANS FOR NEW YORK**

While the proposal still being debated in the Senate, the House bill would provide immediate and targeted help in the following two areas:

*Unemployment Benefits* - 1.1 million New Yorkers who are currently out of work will benefit from the \$25 per week increase in unemployment insurance as well as the additional 33 weeks of benefits that the Federal government is looking to provide until December 31, 2009. (That includes almost 175,000 New Yorkers who would have seen their benefits end in April 2009.)

*Healthcare*- The bill would also provide assistance for workers who have lost their health insurance by providing a temporary 65 percent subsidy for COBRA healthcare premiums, making funding available to states that elect to provide Medicaid coverage to unemployed and uninsured individuals and their families; and extending the qualification for COBRA benefits for older and long term workers until they obtain new employer-sponsored coverage or become eligible for Medicare. (Under current law, eligible workers may continue to receive health coverage through a previous employer's health plan for up to 18 months, but are responsible for 102 percent of the cost of that coverage.)



*Rangel announces local Recovery Package Benefits  
with Mayor Michael Bloomberg (credit: Office of the Mayor)*

Click [here](#) to see what the package could mean for New York City.

## **MORE ONLINE RESOURCES FOR THE RECOVERY PACKAGE**

[Text of provisions in H.R. 1](#) approved by the Ways and Means Committee last week.

[Detailed summaries](#) of the sections of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Plan falling under the jurisdiction of the Ways and Means Committee.

[More information](#) on the The American Economic Recovery and Reinvestment Plan.

## **RANGEL, LEADERS URGE NEW YORKERS TO FILE FOR EITC**

As taxpayers begin to file their taxes, Congressman Charles Rangel joined federal, city and community officials on January 31 in urging New Yorkers to get the most out of their returns by making sure they apply for every eligible tax benefit, including the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).

Rangel joined Internal Revenue Service Commissioner Doug Shulman , New York City Department of Consumer Affairs Commissioner Jonathan Mintz, Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer, Food Bank Pres. & CEO Dr. Lucy Cabrera and Food Bank Board Chairman Rev. Henry Belin Friday, Jan. to discuss the EITC and the various ways low-wage earners can receive free tax preparation.

"This is not a handout but money that people have earned through their daily labor. Money that can help struggling families through these tough times," said Rangel. Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, Congress' major tax-writing committee.

The IRS estimates that about one in four eligible taxpayers fails to claim the EITC, meaning that scores of local residents could be missing out on thousands of dollars in tax refunds. In the Congressman's own 15th Congressional District, as many as 20,000 eligible taxpayers do not, losing out on an average of \$2,000 in benefits.

Click [here](#) for more information about the news conference. For more information on the EITC and where you can find tax assistance within the 15th Congressional District, call 311 or visit Congressman Rangel's Tax Assistance page at <http://www.rangel.house.gov/taxhelp.shtml> starting February 10.

## **CELEBRATING 75 YEARS OF THE APOLLO THEATER**

Congressman Rangel joined thousands of fans worldwide in congratulating the Apollo Theater on kicking off its 75th anniversary season, recognizing the Theater's place in the Harlem community and its impact on American arts and culture.

"Before there was American Idol, there was Amateur Night at the Apollo, which launched the dreams of stardom for many of America's greatest entertainers. Among them are some of the legends: Ella Fitzgerald, Stevie Wonder, and James Brown.

"Located in the heart of Harlem on 125th Street, the Apollo is the musical soul of our community. For the past 74 years, it has thrilled Americans of every race and religion who have enjoyed unforgettable performances by new and established artists. It's a special place in the entertainment world where many celebrities who started here come home and "look back."

Rangel also thanked Apollo Theater Foundation president & CEO Jonelle Procope and board chairman Richard D. Parsons for their leadership and their efforts in putting together this year's celebration and singled out former Manhattan Borough President and longtime community leader and friend Percy Sutton for his dedication to the famed institution.

"We probably wouldn't be talking about this celebration if it weren't for the hard work of so many, especially Percy Sutton," said Range Angel "His dedication helped save the Apollo Theater and helped make this day possible."

## **PUSHING FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE**

Congressman Rangel stressed the importance of small grassroots organizations in achieving environmental justice and equity, as he joined a crowd of over 400 people on January 31 for the "Advancing Climate Justice: Transforming the Economy, Public Health and Our Environment" national conference in New York.

"Our community groups are our faceless heroes, much like those who participated in the Civil Rights movement when people said that life was unfair and equality would never come," said Rangel. "Organizing and education, the election of an African-American president, this has to be just the beginning, not only in terms of justice regarding carbon emissions, but leadership on the fiscal crisis, health care and the environment.

Rangel thanked WE ACT for Environmental Justice for organizing the conference and praised WE ACT Executive Director Peggy Shepard for her longtime dedication and efforts on the issues.

"She has been a strong, sometimes even a lone voice, in this fight [for environmental justice]," said the Congressman. "A leader that has been passionate in educating us on everything from where bus depots should be located to waste removal to the equality of life.

Rangel said that creating a cleaner environment would go along way in securing America's long-term economic future. As the world prepares for the Copenhagen Climate Conference at the end of the year, he said that everyone had an obligation to leave the planet in better shape than they found it. Doing so, however, would be easier with an environmentally friendly White House and Congress. Thankfully, support for green and alternative energy is not just in the economic recovery package currently before Congress, but also in measures to be debated beyond the spring.

"I plan on using the power of the dollar and the Ways and Means Committee to provide incentives for alternative fuels, a carbon tax, and a tax and trade system, said Rangel. "We will determine what the best thing to do with the money raised to do research for alternative fuels."

Rangel said that he hoped that participants would leave the conference passionately inspired on bringing about a greener Washington and world.

"The power of change is not in Washington, DC, but here in your hands," he said. "You need to let people know that change in our environmental practices is not a far fetched theory, and that the loss of life to respiratory disease cannot be accepted as a way of life. "

## **FIGHTING FOR FAMILIES & IMMIGRATION REFORM**

On January 10, 2009, Congressman Rangel joined thousands of New Yorkers for a religious community gathering to bring attention to America's broken immigration system. The event was part of a national series of events that looks to document the testimonies of families being torn apart by raids and other anti-family policies.



*Rep. Rangel and religious leaders urge an end to immigration policies that tear families apart. (credit: Ozzie Fernandez)*

Rangel was joined by New York members of Congress, Rep. Jose Serrano and Nydia Velazquez, Illinois Congressman Luis Gutierrez and members from spiritual organizations like Confraternidad de Lideres Conciliares (CONLICO), the Latino Leadership Circle, Latino Pastoral Action Center, National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference and the New York Council of Churches

Rangel applauded the activism of the pastors and said that he supported the groups efforts in trying to get President-elect Obama to champion comprehensive reform legislation during his first year and to end the immigration raids that have targeted immigrant workers and families.

"This is an opportunity to organize religious leaders that do not have as their primary concern getting re-elected or working out a compromise where some people survive and some people are destroyed," said Rangel. "No matter what your religion is, we all know that the most precious thing that we have is life and our children...Let us restore the reputation of America, let the whole world know that we are not in the business of ripping families apart and destroying lives."

## **PRESIDENT SIGNS FAIR PAY ACT**

Congressman Rangel applauded President Barack Obama's swift signing of the Lily Ledbetter Fair Pay Act on January 29. The legislation, the first of the new Administration, rectifies a recent Supreme Court decision that has made it harder for workers to pursue pay discrimination claims.

Although the wage gap between men and women has narrowed since the passage of the Equal Pay Act in 1963, gender-based wage discrimination remains a significant problem for women in the U.S. workforce. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, women only make 77 cents for every dollar earned by a man. In addition, African American women only earn 66 cents on the dollar while Hispanic women

earn 55 cents on the dollar compared to their male counterparts.

For more information on the Paycheck Fairness Act, visit  
<http://edlabor.house.gov/issues/paycheckfairness.shtml>"

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