



**NATIONAL HEMOPHILIA FOUNDATION**  
*for all bleeding and clotting disorders*

## **Update on GINA and SCHIP**

### **Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act (GINA)**

The Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act (GINA) prevents employers and insurance companies from requiring genetic testing or information, and from discrimination based on genetic information for hiring and promotions, insurance eligibility or premiums, and related matters. Without this protection, individuals who could benefit from genetic testing, including many with bleeding and clotting disorders, might avoid these tests out of fear of possible discrimination. The legislation has been introduced yearly for the last 12 years.

The House bill (H.R. 493) passed the by a nearly unanimous vote of 420-3 on April 26, 2007. Despite passing the Senate in the previous Congress by a comfortable margin, the bill (S. 358) has not come up to the Senate floor yet. Senator Tom Coburn (R-OK) has placed a hold on the bill, preventing it from being voted on in the Senate. It is unclear why Senator Coburn objects to the bill. He has said that he will release his hold, but that has yet to happen.

President Bush has indicated he will sign the legislation once it reaches his desk.

**NHF continues to support the passage of GINA and thanks the majority of members in both houses for their support.**

### **State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP)**

The reauthorization of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) was an ongoing battle throughout 2007. SCHIP is an important federal program that provides healthcare coverage to children in low-income families who do not qualify for Medicaid and whose families cannot afford private insurance.

Two bipartisan bills were passed by the House and Senate, increasing funding for SCHIP by \$35 billion for five years, which would cover an additional 10 million low-income children. The bills also expanded eligibility for the program by increasing the income threshold above the existing 200% of the poverty level. The administration supported a \$5 billion increase over five years, and sought to narrowly limit eligibility.

In 2007, Congress passed two different versions of a bill expanding the program to cover more children. However, both bills were vetoed by President Bush, despite broad bipartisan support, and there were not enough votes to override the vetoes. In late December 2007, the Medicare, Medicaid and SCHIP Extension Act (S. 2499), was introduced and passed, providing a simple extension of SCHIP through March 2009 at current funding levels and maintaining coverage for six million children.

**NHF strongly supports the expansion of SCHIP to cover more children.**