The Associated Press – **Senator Rockefeller honors anniversary of CHIP** – 8.6.2010

Washington, D.C. - Senator Jay Rockefeller (D-W.Va.) today issued the following statement in honor of the 13th anniversary of the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) being signed into law.

"Since the beginning of my career I have fought to make sure all people, and especially children, have access to affordable health care," said Rockefeller, Chairman of the Finance Subcommittee on Health Care. "I was proud to be one of the original lead authors of this landmark legislation in 1997, and again when the bill was reauthorized in 2009.

"Protecting and providing for our children is one of the most important things we can do, and CHIP is among my most meaningful achievements--as a Senator and as a father with children and grandchildren of my own.

"CHIP has been a proven and successful program, but we must never lose focus to make sure all children have a chance at a healthy start in life. I will never turn my back on the program and the millions of young people who benefit from its creation each and every day. The fight for children is, and should continue to be, the fight that matters most and I couldn't be more proud to have been supporting CHIP for the past 13 years."

Background

Rockefeller, original author of and constant proponent of CHIP, has led the fight to protect the millions of children enrolled in the program.

Originally created in 1997, CHIP is a state and federal partnership that provides low-cost health insurance coverage for children in families who earn too much income to qualify for Medicaid but cannot afford to purchase private health insurance coverage.

CHIP currently covers more than 7 million children nationwide, including 37,645 children in West Virginia last year. By 2013, more than 14.1 million children are expected to be enrolled in the program.

On February 4, 2009, President Obama signed the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act (CHIPRA) into law.

The original health reform bill as introduced in the Senate Finance Committee sought to transfer children currently covered by CHIP into less generous coverage for children offered through the state health insurance exchanges. Senator Rockefeller introduced an amendment to remove this provision and protect the continuity of benefits for the estimated 14.1 million that will be enrolled in CHIP by 2013. This amendment passed successfully and CHIP remained in the final health care reform law. Senator Rockefeller secured additional improvements to CHIP in the final law, which provided for a two-year extension of CHIP until 2015, additional outreach funding, a guarantee of cost-effectiveness of CHIP premium assistance, and a requirement for private insurers to report the same pediatric quality measures as CHIP plans.