

Mississippi Health Advocacy Program NEWS

MHAP News

August 2007

In This Issue

Mississippi State Health Department: Everything Old is New Again!

August Primaries: What Have You Done for Me Lately?

Mississippi's Shame: SCHIP Reauthorization

Quick Links

[Join our Mailing List](#)

[More About Us](#)

MHAP

Mississippi Health Advocacy Programs (MHAP) combines research, analysis and grass-roots organizing to improve health policies, practices and funding in Mississippi, especially in support of the state's poor and underserved people.

Trouble Applying for Medicaid?

Please report any problems or concerns you or your clients may be having applying for Medicaid benefits. Please call the Mississippi Center for Justice **MEDICAID HELP LINE** at **1-877-352-2269**.

Mississippi State Department of Health: Everything Old is New Again

Mississippi's State Department of Health has been one of the most hotly debated agencies in the Legislature for the past two sessions. The Clarion Ledger's expose on the glaring failures of the agency brought on the scorn of the not only the public, but also of legislators. The long hours of committee hearings and floor debates finally culminated with the legislative removal of State Health Officer, Dr. Brian Amy, from his position effective June 30th. In July, the State Board of Health once again appointed Dr. Ed Thompson as the interim State Health Officer of the Mississippi State Department of Health. Dr. Thompson served in this capacity from 1993 to 2002 before moving on to work as the Deputy Director for Public Health Services with the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, GA. After the tumultuous tenure and removal of Dr. Amy, board members, legislators and employees welcomed the familiar leadership of Dr. Thompson. He has already set his sights on some specific lapses that he says must be addressed immediately. These include strengthening of the State lab facilities, lowering the abnormally high infant mortality rates, better surveillance of tuberculosis and STDs in Mississippi and also more timely reporting of West Nile cases. The reinstatement of Dr. Thompson will hopefully restore the Department of Health to its rightful place of one that truly protects all Mississippians' health.

August Primaries: What Have You Done for Me Lately?

I know it's hard to believe, but yes it is that time again. The election season is upon us in full swing. As I'm sure you know by now, August 7th Mississippians will go to the polls to vote for who they want to represent them in the Democratic and Republican parties. Mississippians have the choice of voting for every office from the Governor to agricultural commissioner. As expected, there are promises made of a better and bolder Mississippi, but the very important conversation around health care is getting lost in the rhetoric. With 537,000 uninsured Mississippians, one would think that would be a pretty urgent topic. Gubernatorial candidates have made the obligatory references to Mississippi's perpetual dismal rankings in health care and insurance status. It is up to the voting public to hold their elected officials' feet to the fire and demand that real solutions be put forth and not just sound bytes or else it will be election year politics as usual.



Mississippi's Shame: SCHIP Reauthorization

The State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) that provides health care for uninsured children whose parents make too much to qualify for Medicaid, but not enough to purchase health insurance, is up for federal reauthorization this year. If no action is taken by September 30th the program will end. This program is vital to the health and well-being of the over 100,000 uninsured children in Mississippi. Both Republicans and Democrats recognize the program as an unqualified success, however there are vigorous efforts to derail that progress. In the Senate, this mission is spearheaded by none other than our very own, Senator Trent Lott. The bill managed to pass the Senate Finance Committee, with Sen. Lott being one of only four who opposed the legislation, but it has yet to be introduced on the Senate floor. The bill would call for an increase of \$35 billion dollars which would cover about 3.2 million more children. Even our neighboring states are exploring ways to expand coverage for children. Tennessee and Louisiana just raised their eligibility levels to include those children that fall above the 200% federal poverty level. There are a few times in a legislator's career that he or she has the opportunity to act on legislation that has will have life or death consequences and this is one of those times. MHAP asks you to contact Senator Trent Lott's office and ask him to support **S1893, "The Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) Reauthorization Act"**, when it is called up for a vote. He may be contacted at (601) 965-4644 (Jackson Office), (202) 224-6253 (Washington Office) or at senatorlott@lott.senate.gov.