

Child health insurance expansion shelved

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- Democrats appear to have ceded a yearlong fight to expand U.S. children's health insurance, as the Senate passed a measure keeping existing coverage until 2009. Two presidential vetoes and staunch Republican opposition blocked plans for a \$35 billion expansion of the State Children's Health Insurance Program over the past year. Critics said the expansion would make middle-class children, whose parents could afford healthcare insurance on their own, eligible. Backers said the additional coverage was needed to protect more low-income children. "It's certainly another example of the Democrats caving to the Republican position at the eleventh hour," a spokesman for House Minority Leader John Boehner, R-Ohio, told *The Hill*, a daily Capitol Hill newspaper. The Senate approved extending the program through March 2009 Tuesday and House approval is expected, *The Hill* said. Democrats, however, said the fight isn't over, *The Hill* said. "It does not preclude us from bringing up a strong, bipartisan bill," a spokesman for House Speaker Nancy Pelosi told *The Hill*. "The goal here is to cover 10 million children. That's why discussions will continue. ... If there is an opportunity to have a vote on this legislation, absolutely we will have one."

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