

HHS budget funds SCHIP, tweaks Medicare

by UPI

WASHINGTON - The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' 2009 budget provides healthcare to people who need it, the White House said. The budget, released by the White House Monday, would reauthorize the State Children's Health Insurance Program for low-income children, by providing \$19.7 billion through 2013. SCHIP was a contentious issue between Congress and the White House. Congress passed and President George Bush vetoed two versions of bills that would have expanded the popular insurance program. The House was unable to override Bush's vetoes. Regarding Medicare, the Bush budget would adjust annual provider updates to encourage use of best practices to cut costs and improve efficiencies, and supports payment reforms for providers. It also would reduce Medicare's long-term budget shortfall by more than \$10 trillion over 75 years, nearly one-third of the unfunded obligation, budget documents released by the White House indicated. The HHS budget would provide \$75 million in 2009 and 2010 to help high-risk populations gain access to health insurance. The budget would provide \$507 million to improve the United States' readiness for a flu pandemic and another \$4.4 billion to protect against bioterrorism or other public health emergency, the White House said.

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