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CONTACT:
Susan Nolan
Mike Humphreys
NCOIL National Office
518-687-0178

HEALTH ISSUES LOOM LARGE AT NCOIL SPRING MEETING

Troy, New York, February 7, 2007 — The National Conference of Insurance Legislators (NCOIL) will debate health policy issues that could dramatically reshape the current health insurance landscape during its March 1 through 4 Spring Meeting in Savannah, Georgia.

Representative Brian Kennedy (RI), NCOIL Vice President, said, "Today there are 45 million people, including 9 million children, without health insurance coverage. State lawmakers and Congress alike should be taking steps now to ensure coverage for young children who can't insure themselves, recent high school and college graduates who are risking their health because of the inability to afford a policy, and adults who may be unaware of available assistance to afford health insurance. In Savannah, NCOIL will investigate current reform proposals and debate how it can impact health insurance markets throughout the states."

The Health, Long-Term Care & Health Retirement Issues Committee will discuss the issue of health insurance for children during its Thursday, March 1, meeting from 1:30 to 3:15 p.m. Members will consider sending a letter, sponsored by Representatives Kennedy and George Keiser (ND), urging Congress to reauthorize and expand funding for the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP).

The letter states, "Without prompt congressional action as many as 14 states could be out of federal money by October. Out of those 14 states, six states—Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey and Rhode Island—are projected to exhaust their resources by May 7 and will be forced to make difficult financial decisions."

SCHIP, which enrolls more than 5 million low-income children who may otherwise be uninsured, was created in 1997 and authorized for fiscal years 1998 through 2007 as a federal block grant with a fixed annual funding level.

In line with a focus on health insurance issues, NCOIL will convene a general session on Saturday, March 3, to explore needed state health insurance reform efforts. Panelists will address, among other topics, the 2006 Massachusetts' health care reforms and how they may

serve as a national model, the *Healthy New York* program and its unique reinsurance mechanism, and recent initiatives developed by America's Health Insurance Plans (AHIP).

Speakers for the session, scheduled for 9:45 to 11:00 a.m., include Edmund Haislmaier of The Heritage Foundation, Mary Kay Henry of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Scott Keefer of AHIP, Mila Kofman of the Health Policy Institute at Georgetown University, and Patricia Swolak of the New York Insurance Department.

Also in Committee, legislators will discuss *The Health Partnership Act*, a bill that has been introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate as H.R. 506 and S. 325, respectively. Representative Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) introduced the bill in the House, while Senators Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) and George Voinovich (R-OH) sponsored the Senate bill.

The bill would, among other things, authorize Congress to provide grants to individual states to implement a range of strategies to increase the number of insured individuals, ensure high quality health care, improve the efficiency of health spending, and implement information technology to improve health care infrastructure.

The Committee will also further its consideration of a proposed *Regulation of the Secondary Market in Physician Discounts Act*, sponsored by Senator Joseph Crisco (CT). The model would regulate the health insurance market by requiring disclosures regarding the exchange of physician discount information, among other things. Consideration of the proposed model was deferred at the 2006 Annual Meeting to allow interested parties to continue a dialogue regarding unresolved issues.

The Spring Meeting will be held at the Hyatt Regency Savannah.

NCOIL is an organization of state legislators whose primary focus is insurance legislation and regulation. Many legislators active in NCOIL either chair or are members of the committees responsible for insurance legislation in their respective state houses across the country. More information is available at www.ncoil.org.

For further details, please contact the NCOIL National Office at 518-687-0178, or at mhumphreys@ncoil.org.

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