Children's Health Insurance Program Announcement

*Note - Gov. Perry frequently departs from prepared remarks.

**Thursday, September 20, 2001**

Thank you Commissioner Gilbert. I also want to thank Janie Ruiz, the principal here at Becker Elementary, for allowing us to visit your school for this special announcement.

I’m proud to stand here today and announce that – after only 18 months – the TexCare Partnership has met, and exceeded, its goal of helping the families of more than 428,000 children in Texas gain access to health insurance with the Children’s Health Insurance Program.

And during that time, the level of uninsured children in Texas has dropped by 32 percent.

This success is due, in large part, to those schools, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, and countless individuals around the state that successfully joined together to make Texas parents aware of affordable children's health insurance through the TexCare Partnership.

I am proud that in Texas we are a caring people. Together we agree that the most precious natural resource in Texas is, in fact, our children.

CHIP is a national program designed for families who earn too much money to qualify for Medicaid, yet cannot afford commercial insurance.

The State of Texas developed the TexCare Partnership to raise awareness of new children's health insurance options and to help Texas families obtain affordable coverage for their uninsured children, from newborn through age 19.

This milestone is proof that those awareness efforts are working.

The TexCare Partnership offers a comprehensive benefits package with a full range of coverage, including regular checkups, immunizations, prescription drugs, eyeglasses, lab tests, X-rays, hospital visits, dental care and mental health care – from a broad choice of doctors.

However, our commitment on the state level doesn't end with CHIP. This last legislative session was very good in terms of expanding access to quality health care.

We increased Medicaid funding by $4.3 billion, increased the Children’s Health Insurance Program by $935 million, and funded new rural and border health care priorities.
In addition to the increase funding, we simplified the Medicaid enrollment process. By doing so, hundreds of thousands of our children will be insured. They will be exposed to routine and preventative care, and they will be healthy and learning in the classroom.

Between Medicaid simplification, and the Children's Health Insurance Program, our poorest young Texans will receive the care they need when they need it.

And the TexCare Partnership already has numerous accounts confirming CHIP is carrying out that mission.

Like the story of Alejandro Gamboa, a church deacon in McAllen. He's the father of eight and grandfather of 22, and encourages families in his parish to apply.

CHIP has even come to the rescue for Deacon Alejandro's own family. His 12-year-old grandson Alex developed severe pain and a fever. Because his family was enrolled in CHIP, Alex's mother was able to take him to the doctor and learn that he had appendicitis, which, of course, was an emergency that needed prompt surgery.

Then there's the story of Stephanie Pena, a substitute teacher for the Austin Independent School District.

Stephanie couldn't afford to insure her son, Drew. But when Drew brought a TexCare Partnership application home from school, Stephanie filled it out, and she was enrolled.

She's glad she did, because Drew developed a cardiac problem while he was playing football. He had to have an extensive and expensive series of tests, which showed a heart condition that – fortunately – he will outgrow. Stephanie says she never could have afforded these tests without insurance coverage.

With me today are the children whose enrollment pushed the total over the top and helped us meet our first major goal. I'd like to ask Erica Gonzales and her children, Marina, Gilbert and Eric, to please join me.

Mrs. Gonzales, I want to thank you for calling the TexCare Partnership to sign your children up for needed health insurance. Your example provides hope to all Texas families with uninsured children that something can be done, that they can afford to cover their children.

Yes, we've hit the 428,000-enrollment mark for CHIP. That's definitely something to be proud of. But with more than one million uninsured children still left in Texas, our work is not over.

Thank you and God bless you.