

HOW TO GET THE BUSH DEAD-ENDERS TO DO WHAT YOU WANT

In addition to signing SCHIP yesterday, Obama sent this memo to the current Acting Secretary of Health and Human Services, ordering him to withdraw two Bush-era letters imposing limits on states' SCHIP programs, particularly with regards to income eligibility standards.

On August 17, 2007, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) issued a letter to State health officials limiting the flexibility of States to set income eligibility standards for their SCHIP programs. On May 7, 2008, CMS issued a subsequent letter restating the policy set forth in the August 17, 2007, letter.

The August 17, 2007, letter imposes additional requirements that States must meet in order to cover children under SCHIP plans, including plans that CMS had previously approved. These requirements have limited coverage under several State plans that otherwise would have covered additional, uninsured children. As a result, tens of thousands of children have been denied health care coverage. Unless the August 17, 2007, letter is withdrawn, many more children will be denied coverage.

By this memorandum, I request that you immediately withdraw the August 17, 2007, and May 7, 2008, letters to State health officials and implement SCHIP without the requirements imposed by those letters.

I raise this not just to point to Obama's efforts to make sure as many kids can be covered as possible. I do so to point to how Obama would

get the Bush dead-enders to implement his policies at a time when Obama's appointees are not yet in place.

We've been discussing Obama's inaction on several key issues—notably warrantless wiretapping and, yesterday, on torture. While Obama can't blame inaction in the Binyam Mohammed case on delays on his nominee getting approved, since Hillary is in place, we had a lengthy discussion about what Obama would have to do to implement his policy in a department—like DOJ at the time when the al-Haramain filings were submitted—where he did not yet have his nominee in place.

This memo gives us an idea of what Obama would have to do, I guess: send a damn letter to the Acting Secretary of the department, and order him to do what you want.

Which of course raises the question: if all it takes are one-page memoranda, then where are they on other key policy issues?