

Eli's Rehab Report

NEWS BRIEFS: Obama Gives New SCHIP Legislation a Go

President **Barack Obama** signed into legislation on Feb. 4 a bill that reauthorizes the State Children's Health Insurance Program. The bill extends health coverage to 4 million uninsured children. The new SCHIP legislation plans to spend an additional \$32.8 billion on the program, which currently enrolls around 7 million children.

To furnish the additional money, lawmakers raised the federal tobacco tax by 62 cents to \$1.01 a pack, according to the Feb. 6 edition of PT Bulletin Online, the American Physical Therapy Association's weekly newswire.

Federal funding for the program would have expired on March 31 without Congressional action. Now, the SCHIP program will be funded through Sept. 30, 2013. The law allows states to extend SCHIP and Medicaid to legal immigrant children and pregnant women, the Bulletin reported.

The American Occupational Therapy Association announced it supports this legislation, as it explicitly includes AOTA-supported positions to extend mental health parity to CHIP and to maintain Early, Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment mandates to Medicaid eligible children covered under CHIP.