

HEALTH CARE

# Senate passes bill to expand children's health coverage

By **ROBERT PEAR**  
*New York Times*

WASHINGTON — The Senate passed a bill on Thursday to provide health insurance to more than 4 million uninsured children, as a newly empowered Democratic majority brushed aside Republican objections.

The vote was 66-32, with nine Republicans joining Democrats

**'Unemployment is obviously increasing, and no doubt our numbers (of uninsured) are going to grow, too.'**

LESLIE CONNOR, Santa Cruz County Healthy Kids

to support the bill.

Former President George W. Bush twice vetoed similar legislation. But President Barack Obama is eager to sign the bill as a step toward providing insur-

ance for all children and eventually all Americans.

The Senate debate showed the outlines of what promises to be a much larger political fight over universal coverage. While Dem-

ocrats championed expansion of the child health program, many Republicans, including Sen. John McCain of Arizona, said they worried that it was part of a long-term effort to replace private health insurance with government programs.

The House passed a nearly identical bill two weeks ago, by

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APTOS

### Sutter lauded for support of children

Sutter Maternity & Surgery Center and its parent, the Palo Alto Medical Foundation, received the 2009 Champion for Children award Thursday night from the Healthy Kids Coalition.

Sutter has donated \$800,000 to Healthy Kids and other health care coverage programs. About 98 percent of children in Santa Cruz County are covered by health insurance.

County Supervisor John Leopold and Ali Spickler, representing Assemblyman Bill Monning, D-Monterey, presented the award to Dr. Larry De Ghetaldi, Santa Cruz Sutter chief executive officer, at Seson House. About 60 people were in attendance, including physicians, foundation representatives, members of the Health Improvement Partnership, First 5 commissioners, county supervisors and local donors.

Ezra Klein, associate editor at the American Prospect, spoke about health care reform.