



# A HEALTHY START: THE CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM

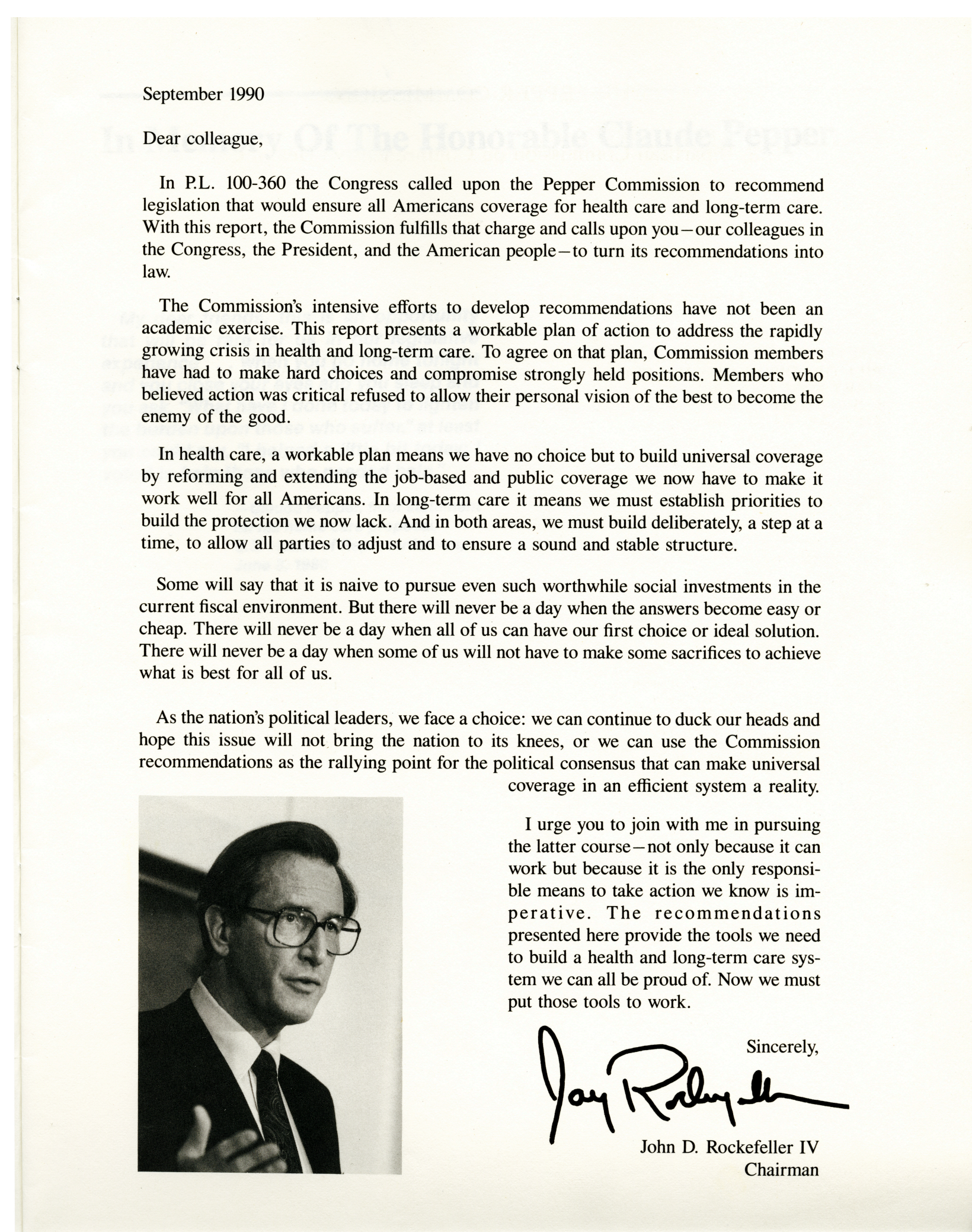
For Senator Jay Rockefeller, the origins of the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) are in his service as a VISTA volunteer in Emmons, WV, an experience that exposed him to the plight of children who lacked access to health care. As a freshman senator, Rockefeller was tapped to chair the Pepper Commission (1989-1990), which conducted a thorough review of health care and long-term care in the United States. While serving as chair, he heard stories that reinforced his belief that many Americans, including children, lacked adequate access to health care and coverage, and he felt Congress needed to better address the needs of children. Rockefeller deepened his understanding of and his commitment to the needs of the nation's children during his time as chair of the National Commission on Children (1989-1993).



Jay Rockefeller arrived in Emmons, WV, in 1964 as a VISTA volunteer. Among his many efforts in the community was obtaining access to health care for residents.

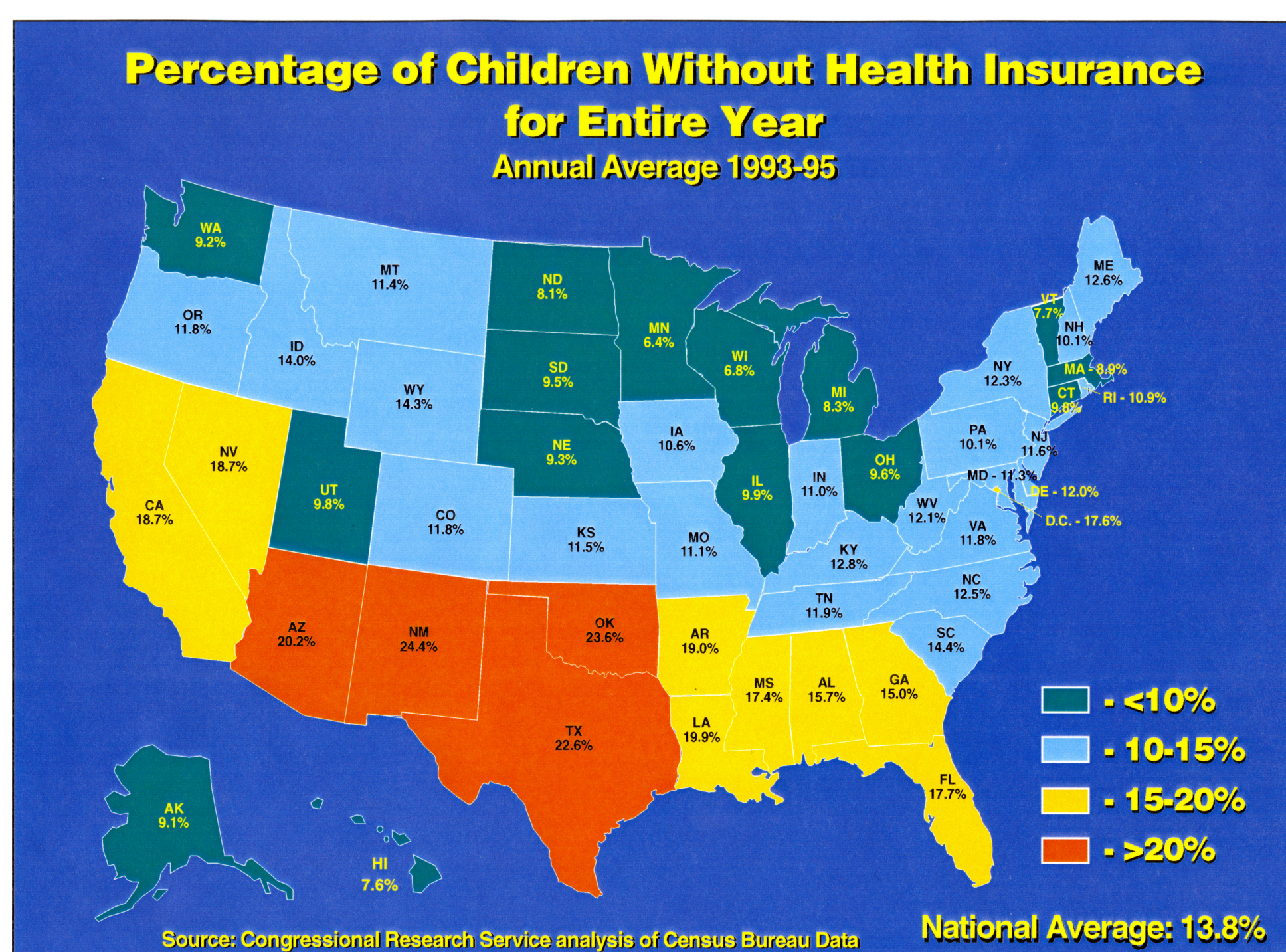
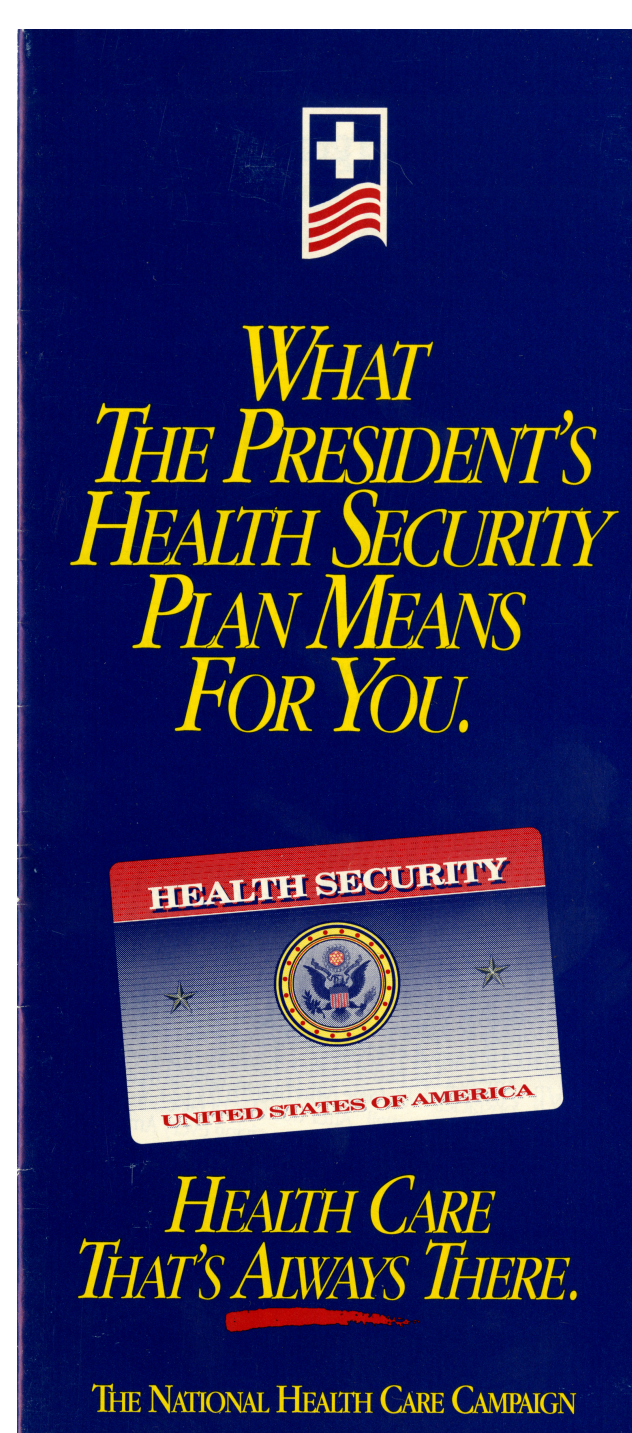


Senator Rockefeller chaired the U.S. Bipartisan Commission on Comprehensive Health Care, also known as the Pepper Commission, which studied long-term care and health reform. Above: Rockefeller spoke at a 1990 press conference about the Commission's report. Right: The report summary called for universal coverage.

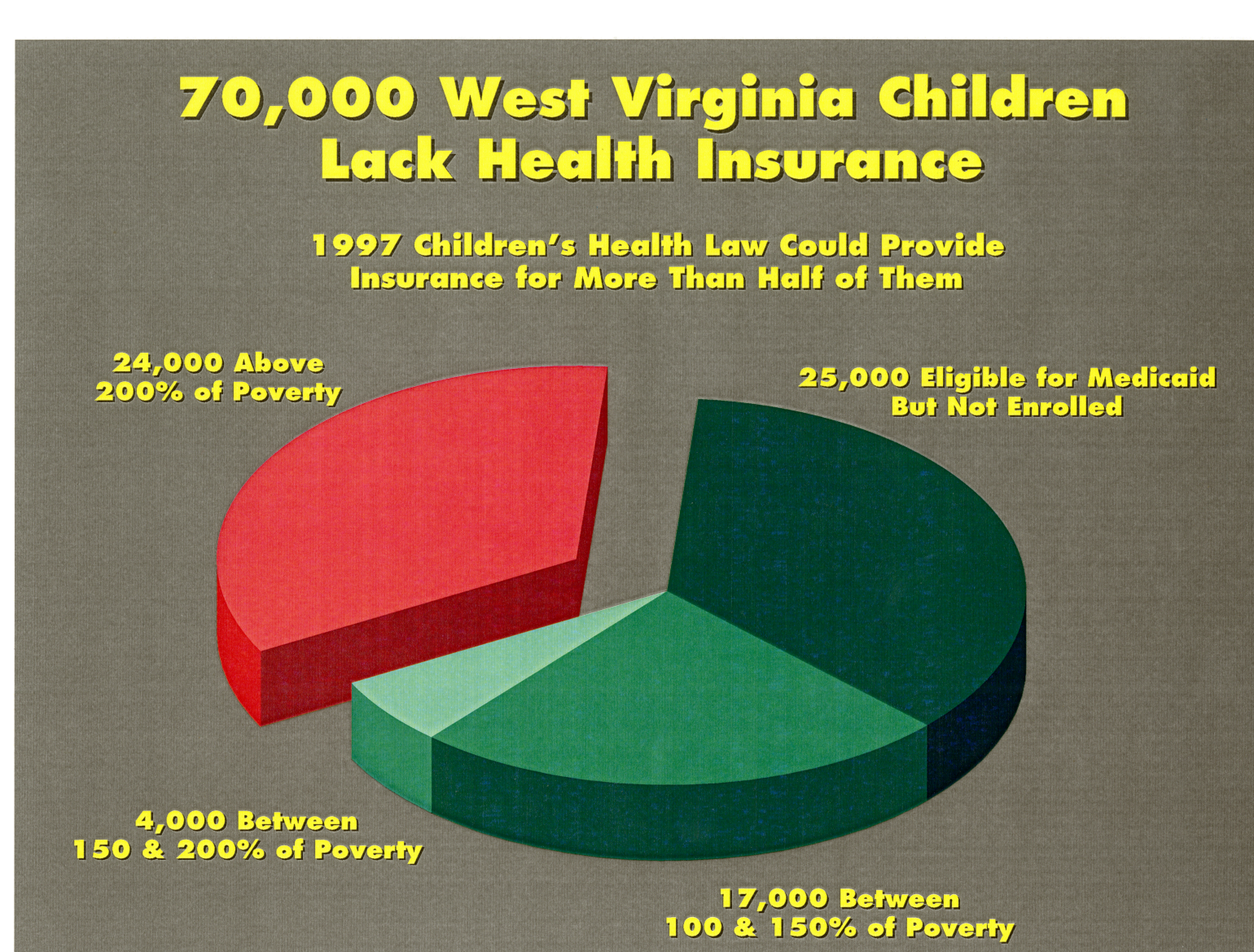


Senator Rockefeller posed with children from the Senate Day Care Center in April 1990. The Center celebrated April as the "Month of the Young Child" and recognized Rockefeller for his work as chairman of the National Commission on Children.

In the early 1990s, Rockefeller worked with the Clinton administration to pass a comprehensive health care reform package, but Congress voted against the legislation. Following its defeat, Rockefeller determined that future health initiatives would need to be more modest and gain bipartisan support in order to succeed. Focus turned to expanding health care coverage for the country's more than 10 million uninsured children. Studies showed that children who lacked insurance, or children who experienced gaps in coverage, were less likely to receive necessary preventive care, have routine doctor visits or a regular source of medical care, and were less likely to be immunized.



In 1997, Rockefeller was instrumental in creating CHIP, the largest federal investment in children's health since the creation of Medicaid in 1965. In its twentieth year, CHIP remains an example of bipartisan policy creation and federal and state collaboration that can inform ongoing discussions about health care reform.



Top left: The Health Security Plan pamphlet outlined the Clinton administration's proposed health reform plan. Congress voted against the legislation in 1994.

Top right: A 1997 map created by Rockefeller's office showed the percentage of children without insurance for an entire year in each state.

Left: A pie chart showed the number of children in West Virginia who lacked health insurance.

**“When I first arrived as a VISTA volunteer in Emmons, there were children in the town and across the state who had never seen a doctor because their families simply did not have the money to cover the cost of a physician visit or dental care...I thought then to myself, as I still do now, that no parent should have to carry the stresses of knowing that you cannot afford care for your children...”**

Senator Jay Rockefeller, Senate Finance Committee hearing, September 16, 2014