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Herger**  
Congressman

**2nd District - California**



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
DECEMBER 19, 2005

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## **Herger Lauds House Passage of Bill Extending Welfare Reform Law**

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) - Congressman Wally Herger (CA-02) today applauded House passage of a measure to reauthorize and extend the welfare-to-work reforms first passed in 1996. The welfare reauthorization legislation was included in the larger Deficit Reduction Act, which the House passed early Monday morning. The 1996 welfare reform law initially expired in 2002, and the House has acted twice to pass a long-term reauthorization bill, only to see both measures stymied in the Senate. In lieu of a long-term reauthorization, Congress has passed eleven measures to temporarily extend current law and allow the 1996 reforms to continue. Today's action reauthorizes the law for another 5 years and strengthens and improves upon many of the 1996 reforms. Herger made the following comment after today's action:

"I'm extremely pleased that the budget savings bill includes a long-term extension of, and improvements to, the nation's welfare-to-work law," Herger stated. "Today's action demonstrates the House's continuing commitment to the successful reforms of 1996, namely the concept that work, rather than welfare, is the springboard toward strengthening our families and elevating more Americans out of poverty."

"Following the 1996 reforms, the number of families receiving cash assistance has declined an incredible 56%, from 4.8 million families in 1995, to 2.1 million today," continued Herger. "This bill will help ensure this remarkable success continues, by strengthening work requirements and encouraging healthy marriage and stronger families, while also increasing child care funding."

The welfare-to-work provisions in the Deficit Reduction Act would reauthorize the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) block grant through FY 2010 at its current funding level, while increasing child care funding by \$1 billion. It also authorizes funding for programs to promote healthy marriage, as proposed by the President, and responsible fatherhood, which will help encourage strong and stable families. The bill also requires the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) to develop regulations to ensure that state work participation rates are measured accurately, and requires states to establish their own procedures for determining what activities may be counted as work activities, how to count and verify hours of work, and which parents are expected to work in accordance with the regulations developed by HHS.

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"While the final compromise bill does not contain all the provisions I supported in earlier House-passed bills, it strengthens current law by expecting more parents who are currently on welfare to go to work, while providing them support as they make the transition," added Herger. "This transition is the path out of poverty and into self-sufficiency.

"I am also pleased that we were able to follow through on our commitment to increase child care funds even beyond the level in the House-passed bill, which will help more families make the transition to work. The increase is even more significant when considering the significant drop in welfare caseloads since the 1996 reforms, and the current difficult budget environment.

Herger concluded, "This bill represents a major victory in the effort to redirect vulnerable families from long-term welfare dependence and towards employment, self sufficiency, and stronger families. I am pleased that the House included these provisions in this legislation and urge the Senate to follow suit."

The Senate is expected to consider the conference report on the Deficit Reduction Act in the next several days. If the Senate passes the measure, the president has indicated that he will sign it into law.

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