

2008 Children's Defense Fund Action Council® Nonpartisan Congressional Scorecard

Children's Defense Fund
Action Council®

U.S. CONGRESS REPORT CARD 2008

		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Final
Health Care	Achievement					72% = C
	Effort					
	Knows basis facts					
	Problem solving					
	Understands concepts					
Child Poverty	Completes assignments					70% = C
	Achievement					73% = C
	Effort					
	Knows basis facts					
	Problem solving					
	Understands concepts					
Early Childhood Development and Education	Completes assignments					73% = C
	Achievement					77% = C
	Effort					
	Knows basis facts					
	Problem solving					
	Understands concepts					
Child Welfare	Completes assignments					77% = C
	Achievement					77% = C
	Effort					
	Knows basis facts					
	Problem solving					
	Understands concepts					

Scorecard Highlights

- While the 2008 scores for Members of Congress generally were higher than in past years, fewer than one-third of all Senators scored 100 percent, and 18 Senators failed to make a passing grade of 60 percent or higher.
- In the House of Representatives, Members on average had a passing score, but only 166 (38 percent) scored 100 percent. Ninety-eight Representatives (22 percent) failed to make a passing grade of 60 percent or higher.
- It is notable that 14 of the 23 Members of the House of Representatives who were defeated in the November 2008 election voted for children less than 70 percent of the time in 2007.

See the Entire Congressional Scorecard

Children can't stand up for themselves, which makes them an easy mark for politicians when votes are being taken on funding and other important issues. With your input, crucial decisions about children and families will be made by Congress in 2009. Check the 2008 Children's Defense Fund Action Council® Non-Partisan Congressional Scorecard at www.cdfactioncouncil.org/scorecard and find out how your Members of Congress scored last year in protecting the well-being of children. Then be sure to let your Senators and Representative know that you expect them to stand and vote for children in 2009—and that you will be watching to see how they vote.

CDF Action Council's Comments

What Congress Did Right

As the Scorecard shows, there were important gains made in 2008 in helping young people pay for college, ending discrimination in the delivery of mental health care, increasing safety standards for children's toys, expanding food stamps and other nutrition programs, and extending unemployment benefits.

There were also two bills passed in 2008 without roll call votes that included important improvements to help children in foster care and in the juvenile justice system and to dismantle the pipeline to prison: The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act, among other things, increases the likelihood that children in foster care or at risk of entering foster care could be cared for permanently by extended family; and the Second Chance Act helps adults and juveniles returning to their families and communities after a period of incarceration in juvenile facilities, prisons or jails.

Where Congress Needs Improvement

While important gains were made in 2008, there are great needs that were not addressed. More than 13 million children continue to live in poverty, 5.8 million of them in extreme poverty; yet no action was taken to reduce child poverty. Nine million children are uninsured, but Congress was not able to pass legislation expanding the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) to serve even a portion of those children. Only three percent of eligible children are in Early Head Start and just over half of eligible children are in Head Start; yet funds for these important programs were not increased. A child is abused and neglected in our country every 35 seconds, and while important gains were made in supports for these children who end up in foster care, steps were not taken to prevent abuse and neglect. Despite the fact that a Black boy born in 2001 has a 1 in 3 chance of going to prison in his lifetime, the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act was not reauthorized.

To see the entire Scorecard, go to www.cdfactioncouncil.org/scorecard

How Your Members' Votes Affect Children

Key Senate 2008 Children's Votes

■ Tax Credits to Stimulate the Economy

H.R. 5140, Sen. Roll Call Vote 10; Passed 81–16

This bill provided tax credits to low- and middle-income families who were expected to spend the money quickly to meet their basic needs and stimulate the economy.

■ Extended Unemployment Benefits

H.R. 6867, Sen. Roll Call Vote 214; Motion agreed to 89–6

This bill extended unemployment benefits to help families better meet their needs while seeking work.

■ 2009 Budget Resolution

S. Con. Res. 70, Conference Report, Sen. Roll Call Vote 142;

Adopted 48–45

The Budget Resolution included important funding priorities for children and rejected proposed cuts by President Bush that would have hurt families and children.

■ Health Coverage for Pregnant Women

Amendment to the FY 2009 Budget Resolution, S. Con. Res. 70, Sen. Roll Call Vote 80; Adopted 70–27

This amendment increased the likelihood that low-income pregnant women would have health coverage under SCHIP, which is critical to providing children a healthy start in life.

■ Health and Energy Assistance Funding

Amendment to the FY 2009 Budget Resolution, S. Con. Res. 70, Sen. Roll Call Vote 53; Adopted 95–4

This amendment increased the likelihood that low-income children and families could benefit from help with heating, cooling and related energy costs and also increased funding for medical research.

■ Moratorium on Harmful Medicaid Regulations

Supplemental Appropriations – Motion to Concur, H.R. 2642, Sen. Roll Call Vote 137; Agreed to 75–22

This amendment placed a moratorium on harmful Medicaid regulations proposed by the Bush Administration that would have seriously jeopardized access to health and mental health care for various groups of vulnerable children and adults.

■ Support for Mental Health Benefits/Tax Provisions Extensions

H.R. 6049, Sen. Roll Call Vote 204; Agreed to 84–11

This amendment made it possible for the Senate to vote to eliminate discrimination in the coverage of mental health treatment for children and adults.

■ Increases in Funding for Food Stamps and Other Nutrition Programs

H.R. 6124, Sen. Roll Call Vote 144; Passed 77–15

This bill helped children and families by increasing investments in food stamps and other nutrition programs to help offset rising food costs.

■ Tighter Safety Standards

H.R. 4040, Conference Report, Sen. Roll Call Vote 193; Passed 89–3

This bill protected children from unsafe toys by strengthening safety regulations and monitoring mechanisms.

■ Help for Youth to Pay for College

H.R. 4137, Conference Report, Sen. Roll Call Vote 194; Passed 83–8

This bill made it easier for more young people, including youths with special needs, to get the financial support necessary to afford a college education.

Key House of Representatives 2008 Children's Votes

■ 2009 Budget Resolution

S. Con. Res. 70, Conference Report, House Roll Call Vote 382; Adopted 214–210

The Budget Resolution included important funding priorities for children and rejected proposed cuts by President Bush that would have hurt families and children.

■ Extended Unemployment Benefits

H.R. 6867, House Roll Call Vote 683; Passed 368–28

This bill extended unemployment benefits to help families better meet their needs while seeking work.

■ Increases in Funding for Food Stamps and Other Nutrition Programs

H.R. 6124, House Roll Call Vote 353; Passed 306–110

This bill helped children and families by increasing investments in food stamps and other nutrition programs to help offset rising food costs.

■ Moratorium on Harmful Medicaid Regulations

H.R. 5613, House Roll Call Vote 209; Passed 349–62

This amendment placed a moratorium on harmful Medicaid regulations proposed by the Bush Administration that would have seriously jeopardized access to health and mental health care for various groups of vulnerable children and adults.

■ Parity for Mental Health Benefits

H.R. 6983, House Roll Call Vote 625; Passed 376–47

This bill eliminated discrimination in the coverage of mental health treatment for children and adults.

■ Equal Treatment for Mental Health Patients

H.R. 1424, House Roll Call Vote 101; Passed 268–148

This bill expanded health insurance coverage of mental health conditions and ended discrimination in the coverage of mental health treatment for children and adults.

■ Paid Leave for Parents

H.R. 5781, House Roll Call Vote 428; Passed 278–146

This bill provides four weeks of paid parental leave for federal employees to allow them to stay at home with a newborn child or newly adopted children without having to worry about losing pay or losing their job.

■ Tighter Safety Standards

H.R. 4040, Conference Report, House Roll Call Vote 543; Passed 424–1

This bill was a vote to protect children from unsafe toys by strengthening safety regulations and monitoring mechanisms.

■ Help for Youth to Pay for College

H.R. 4137, Conference Report, House Roll Call Vote 544; Passed 380–49

This bill made it easier for more young people, including youths with special needs, to get the financial support necessary to afford a college education.

■ Protection for Youths in Residential Programs

H.R. 6358, House Roll Call Vote 459; Passed 318–103

This bill protects youths in private residential treatment programs from abuse and neglect by requiring the Department of Health and Human Services to enforce health and safety standards for children in such programs and requiring staff to notify parents when their children's treatment changes or abuses occur.

State Delegations' Scores

State	Percent	Grade
Hawaii	100%	A
Connecticut	97%	A
North Dakota	97%	A
Maine	95%	A
Massachusetts	93%	A
Montana	93%	A
South Dakota	93%	A
Vermont	93%	A
Oregon	91%	A
New York	90%	A
Arkansas	90%	A
Rhode Island	90%	A
West Virginia	90%	A
Maryland	88%	B
Pennsylvania	88%	B
Washington	86%	B
Mississippi	84%	B
New Jersey	83%	B
Minnesota	82%	B
Michigan	82%	B
Illinois	81%	B
Iowa	80%	B
Wisconsin	79%	C
California	79%	C
Kansas	78%	C
Nevada	78%	C
New Hampshire	78%	C
North Carolina	77%	C
Louisiana	77%	C
Alaska	77%	C
Missouri	75%	C
New Mexico	74%	C
Kentucky	74%	C

To see the entire Scorecard, go to www.cdfactioncouncil.org/scorecard

State Delegations' Scores (continued)

State	Percent	Grade
Colorado	72%	C
Ohio	72%	C
Indiana	72%	C
Virginia	72%	C
Delaware	70%	C
Florida	69%	D
Alabama	67%	D
Tennessee	65%	D
Texas	61%	D
Idaho	60%	D
Nebraska	60%	D
Oklahoma	60%	D
Georgia	54%	F
South Carolina	53%	F
Arizona	52%	F
Utah	44%	F
Wyoming	33%	F

“The test of the morality of a society is what it does for its children.”

— German Protestant Theologian
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

What You Can Do to Help Children

Now in 2009 with a new Congress and a new President, as a nation we have another chance to step forward to ensure a level playing field for every child. Although it is still early in 2009, this is certainly a transformative moment in American history. President Obama's Budget and the Budget Resolutions passed by the House and the Senate prioritize investments in refundable tax credits for families with children, long overdue health care reform, early childhood development and education. Together they can help restore America's economic stability and prepare our children and nation for the future.

Join us in 2009 as we work to move forward on our priorities for children:

■ End Child Poverty

Poor children lag behind their peers in many ways, and every year that we keep children in poverty costs our nation half a trillion dollars in lost productivity. We must end poverty through investments in high quality education, livable wages, job training, income supplements, and work supports like child care and health care coverage.

■ Ensure Comprehensive Health and Mental Health Coverage for All Children and Pregnant Women

The United States is the wealthiest nation in the world, yet children's health status in our country as measured by selected indicators is among the worst in the industrialized world.

■ Provide High Quality Early Childhood Development Programs for All

Quality child care and preschool programs are crucial for ensuring children enter school ready to learn. And studies reveal that those enrolled in these programs are subsequently more likely to complete higher levels of education and be in better health and stable relationships.

■ Ensure Every Child Can Read at Grade Level by Fourth Grade and Guarantee Quality Education through High School Graduation

Attainment of a high school diploma is the single most effective preventive strategy against adult poverty. We need to ensure our schools have adequate resources to provide high quality education to every child.

■ Protect Children from Abuse and Neglect and Connect Them to Caring Permanent Families

Almost 900,000 children each year are abused or neglected, yet 40 percent of these children get no services at all after the initial investigation. Children left with no permanent family connections or caring adult have no one to turn to for support. We must expand prevention and specialized treatment services for children and their parents, and increase accountability for results.

■ Stop the Criminalization of Children at Increasingly Younger Ages and Invest in Prevention and Intervention

States spend about three times as much money per prisoner as per public school pupil. We must focus less on punishment and more on early intervention and prevention strategies, such as quality early childhood development and education.



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