

How the CDF Action Council Compiles This Congressional Scorecard

The 2011 Children's Defense Fund Action Council® Nonpartisan Congressional Scorecard scores eight Senate and 10 House votes in 2011 that affected the lives of countless children. The votes in the 2011 Congressional Scorecard cover a range of issues, including early childhood, child health, hunger and nutrition, K-12 and higher education, child welfare, and other protections for low-income families. This scorecard also includes in the final tabulation whether members of the 112th Congress have taken the Americans for Tax Reform's anti-children Taxpayer Protection Pledge.

In compiling the scorecard, members who served only part of a term are scored only on votes cast while in office. Members not voting and votes cast as "present" are scored as votes against children. While we acknowledge that some missed votes are unavoidable due to illness or emergency, it is not possible for us to objectively determine the reason behind each missed vote. Certainly Congresswoman Gabby Giffords, who has always scored well on the CDF Action Council's Nonpartisan Congressional Scorecard, stands out this year. The tragic shooting in Tucson on January 8, 2011 that claimed six lives and left Congresswoman Giffords with traumatic brain injuries kept her off the House floor for much of the year. It should also be noted that the Speaker of the House holds a unique position. Although entitled to participate in debate and to vote, the Speaker traditionally votes only when the vote would be decisive and on matters of special importance such as constitutional amendments. As a result, the Speaker's overall score may not reflect true policy preferences.

Information on how a Representative or Senator voted on each selected bill comes from the *Congressional Quarterly's* automated Internet legislative database (cq.com) and is based on the *Congressional Quarterly's* record of the votes. These votes are also checked by CDF against the House and Senate roll call votes to ensure consistency.

The CDF Action Council hopes this Nonpartisan Congressional Scorecard will serve as an important educational tool as you review the actions of your Members of Congress. Please call, write, and visit your Senators and Representative in Washington, D.C., and in their district offices and urge them to support children. To find out who represents you in Congress visit www.congressmerge.com. You can also sign up for Action Alerts from the CDF Action Council or CDF, its sister organization, to find out when Congress is making critical decisions about children and to let them know your views by entering your zip code and email in the "Get Email Alerts" section of our website.

This annual Nonpartisan Congressional Scorecard is part of the CDF Action Council's ongoing public education, policy analysis, and advocacy for children. It should not be taken as an endorsement of any candidate for public office.