

# Preface

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## Congressional Deficit: Leaving Millions of Children Behind

After nearly one million children fell into poverty in 2010, millions of American children and families struggled with hunger and homelessness. Yet Congress in 2011 mostly ignored the 16.1 million poor children and the 7.3 million *extremely* poor children in need. The polarized and hyper-partisan 112<sup>th</sup> Congress passed not a single major bill to relieve their suffering and bickered its way through high-stakes deadlines to set a record as one of the least productive Congressional sessions ever.

### *The Ryan Budget*

In April 2011, the U.S. House of Representatives launched an all-out assault on children and families in need by passing the “Ryan Budget.” This drastic budget proposed hundreds of billions in cuts from child investments; repealed the landmark health reform law that provides coverage to 95 percent of children; eliminated protections for more than 30 million children currently served by Medicaid; cut children and families from food subsidies; and chopped education subsidies for 9.4 million low-income college students. Ryanomics robs poor children of their futures, rewards the rich by extending the massive Bush tax cuts for millionaires and billionaires, and costs taxpayers \$800 billion over 10 years. Ryanomics leaves no doubt—if we give more massive tax breaks to the richest 2 percent and corporations today, we don’t have the resources to protect and prepare our children for a strong America tomorrow.

### *The Anti-Child Taxpayer Protection Pledge*

The “Taxpayer Protection Pledge,” sponsored by Grover Norquist’s Americans for Tax Reform, is a written promise that asks every state and federal candidate to “oppose and vote against any and all efforts to increase taxes.”<sup>1</sup> By signing the pledge, elected officials promise to oppose 1) “any and all efforts to increase the marginal income tax rate for individuals and businesses” and 2) “any net reduction or elimination of deductions and credits, unless matched dollar for dollar by further reducing tax rates.”<sup>2</sup> A majority of our Members of Congress have so handcuffed themselves to the pledge that routine decisions like raising the debt ceiling created gridlock taking our nation to the brink of default. Their irresponsible abdication of judgment has put millions of our children and our nation at risk.

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<sup>1</sup> Americans for Tax Reform, *State Legislator: Taxpayer Protection Pledge*, 2011, retrieved Oct. 18, 2012, available at <http://www.atr.org/userfiles/StatePledge.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Americans for Tax Reform, *U.S. House: Taxpayer Protection Pledge*, 2011, retrieved Oct. 18, 2012, available at [http://www.atr.org/userfiles/Congressional\\_pledge\(1\).pdf](http://www.atr.org/userfiles/Congressional_pledge(1).pdf).

Income and wealth inequality have grown hugely, threatening the very fabric of our democracy. Since 1979, the highest-income Americans (top 1 percent) have seen their incomes grow by 275 percent, while the bottom 20 percent has seen only an 18 percent increase. *The top 1 percent holds more net worth than the bottom 90 percent combined.* In 2008, the 400 highest-income taxpayers earned as much as the combined tax revenue of 22 state governments with almost 42 million citizens. And yet Grover Norquist has convinced 279 Members of Congress to pledge not to raise a single dollar in taxes from those who benefit most from unjust tax cuts and loopholes that have enriched the rich, ravaged the poor and middle class, and jeopardized our economy with a housing bubble created by bad mortgages that required massive bailouts of corporations “too big to fail” while millions of Americans lost their homes and pensions.

If these reckless tax policies persist, cascading federal, state, and local budget cuts will continue to hurt millions of families, the misery of epidemic poverty will continue to grow, and a vanishing American dream will continue to disappear for millions of children. These facts led the CDF Action Council to include the “Taxpayer Protection Pledge” as **a vote against children** in its 2011 Scorecard.

### How Members of Congress Scored

On the whole, the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress was a “do-nothing” Congress. But many did respond to our calls to defend health care reform, invest in children, and prevent the national budget from being balanced on the backs of babies. Thanks to public pressure, child advocates in the House and Senate supported critical votes outlined in the 2011 CDF Action Council Scorecard. We are grateful that **141 Members of Congress scored 100 percent** and **223 Members scored between 80 and 100 percent**. Please thank them for voting against the following proposals that would have eliminated essential supports for low-income children and families:

- Repeal of the landmark Affordable Care Act
- The Ryan House budget
- Elimination of Eligibility Provisions for the Food Stamp Program
- Balanced Budget Amendment

The bad news is that **302 Members of Congress scored below 60 percent**—a failing grade—and **21 of these Members scored zero on our Scorecard**. If your members are among them, please let them hear from you and hold them accountable.

By “keeping score,” we remind our political leaders that we are paying attention. Our Scorecard makes clear that America’s greatest deficit is not one of money but of values and priorities. We cannot leave millions of children without hope or a vision of a future worth striving for in our materially powerful but spiritually poor nation. Let us demand that all our political leaders pledge not to ask children to sacrifice their hopes and health and food and education while asking for no sacrifice from powerful billionaires and corporations who have already reaped more than their fair share.