

How the Selected Votes Impact Children

2009 U.S. House of Representatives Votes

Vote #1 - Child Health (SCHIP) Expansion (H.R.2, RCV #16, Passage of the Bill to the Senate, January 14, 2009; RCV #50, Resolving Differences in the Senate Version of the Bill, February 4, 2009)

Why This Vote Matters

This reauthorization of the State Children's Health Insurance Program took more than two years to complete. It passed the House and Senate in 2007 and 2008 but was vetoed by President Bush. The law:^{viii}

Covers 4 million additional children and:

- Is fully paid for, primarily with a 62-cent increase in the tobacco tax
- Extends federal support for CHIP through 2013
- Gives states new tools to reach uninsured children
- Removes the five-year waiting period for legal immigrant children and pregnant women
- Improves the benefit package with dental care and mental health care
- Makes sure that federal funding goes to states that are using the money
- Makes it easier for U.S. citizens to document their citizenship
- Allows states to cover children in families with incomes up to 300 percent of the federal poverty level
- Requires states to change the way they fund coverage for their parents

The bill passed 289-139 initially, and the final version of the bill that resolved differences with the Senate passed 290-135. President Obama signed the bill into law on February 4, 2009.

Vote #2 - Ledbetter Fair Pay Act (H.R.12, RCV #8, Passage of the Bill to the Senate, January 9, 2009; S.181, RCV #37, Resolving Differences in the Senate Version of the Bill, January 27, 2009)

Why This Vote Matters

This important bill for women, and other workers, rectified the 2007 Ledbetter v. Goodyear

Supreme Court decision that made it difficult for workers to pursue pay discrimination claims. The bill restored the longstanding interpretation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act and other discrimination statutes.^{ix} With more than 13 million single working mothers nationwide, many the sole providers for their children, a vote in favor of this bill helped keep children out of poverty.

The bill passed 256-163 initially, and the final version of the bill that resolved differences with the Senate passed 250-177. President Obama signed the bill into law on February 4, 2009.

Vote #3 - Economic Stimulus (H.R. 1, RCV #46, Passage of the Bill to the Senate, January 28, 2009; RCV #70, Resolving Differences in the Senate Version of the Bill, February 13, 2009)

Why This Vote Matters

Sworn into office while the economy was contracting at an unprecedented rate, the stock market was tumbling, consumer demand was collapsing, and states were facing enormous deficits, President Obama introduced and Congress passed a \$787 billion economic stimulus which included many investments in children and support for working families. It included:

Educational Investments

- \$47 billion in state fiscal relief to prevent cuts in state aid to school districts
- \$26 billion to school districts to fund special education and the No Child Left Behind law
- \$17 billion to boost the maximum Pell Grant by \$500 to \$5,350
- \$2 billion for Head Start

Aid to Poor and Unemployed

- \$40 billion to provide extended unemployment benefits
- \$20 billion to increase food stamp benefits by 14 percent
- \$3 billion in temporary welfare payments

Direct Cash Payments

- \$14 billion to give one-time \$250 payments to Social Security recipients, poor people on Supplemental Security Income, and veterans receiving disability and pensions

Health Care Support

- \$21 billion to provide a 60 percent subsidy of health care insurance premiums for the unemployed under the COBRA program
- \$87 billion to help states with Medicaid

State Block Grants

- \$8 billion in aid to states to defray budget cuts

New Tax Credit

- Approximately \$115 billion for a \$400 per-worker, \$800 per-couple tax credit in 2009 and 2010.
- About \$13 billion to provide a \$2,500 expanded tax credit for college tuition and related expenses for 2009 and 2010.

The bill passed 244-188 initially, and the final version of the bill that resolved differences with the Senate passed 246-183 with one person voting “present.” President Obama signed the bill into law on February 17, 2009.

Vote #4 - Stop Child Abuse in Residential Programs for Teens Act (H.R.911, RCV #72, Passage of the Bill to the Senate, February 23, 2009)

Why This Vote Matters

This bill provides a federal standard for teen/youth rehabilitation facilities that aims to prevent child neglect and abuse while in care. It prohibits facilities from denying teens basic necessities and access to phones. Staff will be trained in what constitutes abuse and to provide emergency medical care. Marketing for residential programs will be more transparent and they will be held accountable for breaking the law. The bill creates a toll-free national hotline for individuals to report cases of abuse and a website with information about substantiated cases of abuse at residential programs. States are held responsible for licensing facilities that are in accordance with the laws and the Department of Health and Human Services will conduct inspections.^{xi}

The bill passed 295-102 and was referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions in the U.S. Senate. It has yet to get a vote in that committee.

Vote #5 - Helping Families Save Their Homes (H.R.1106, RCV #104, Passage of the Bill to the Senate, March 5, 2009; S.896, RCV #271, Resolving Differences in the Senate Version of the Bill, May 19, 2009)

Why This Vote Matters

The home foreclosure crisis, more than 5 million foreclosures^{xii} in 2008 and 2009, has been at the center of the recent economic and stock market collapse. Millions of children have had their lives disrupted. The final version of the bill expands eligibility for Chapter 13 bankruptcy, and expands the HOPE for Homeowners program in order to prevent foreclosures. It also provides \$2.2 billion to address homelessness^{xiii}. The initial bill that passed the House allowed bankruptcy judges to modify the terms of loans for families with existing mortgages. That provision was taken out by the Senate.

The bill passed 234-191 initially, and the final version of the bill that resolved differences with the Senate passed 367-54 with one person voting “present.” President Obama signed the bill into law on May 20, 2009.

Vote # 6 - Volunteerism in Children’s Programs (H.AMDT.43 to H.R.1388, RCV #136, March 18, 2009)

Why This Vote Matters

This amendment to the Generations Invigorating Volunteerism and Education Act to

reauthorize and reform the national service laws would provide volunteers to supervise physical education classes at elementary and secondary schools, provide nutrition education to students, and allow for the supervision of after school physical activity and education programs.

The amendment passed 372-57.

Vote #7 - Greater Support for Program that Serve Disadvantaged Youth (H.AMDT.45 to H.R. 1388, RCV #137, March 18, 2009)

Why This Vote Matters

This amendment to the Generations Invigorating Volunteerism and Education Act to reauthorize and reform the national service laws would increase the operational support given to organizations for individuals enrolled full-time in an approved national service position. It would increase the support from \$600 to \$800 and from \$800 to \$1000 if program supports at least 50 percent disadvantaged youth.

The amendment passed 283-147.

Vote #8 - Generations Invigorating Volunteerism and Education Act (H.R. 1388, RCV #140, Passage of the Bill to the Senate, March 18, 2009; RCV #169, Resolving Differences in the Senate Version of the Bill, March 31, 2009)

Why This Vote Matters

This bill reauthorizes and expands the AmeriCorps program, first established in 1993. It also creates five more service corporations – Veterans’ Corps, the Education Corps, the Healthy Futures Corps, the Clean Energy Corps, and the Opportunity Corps. The bill:

- Grows the number of volunteers to 250,000, up from 75,000, and increases the education award received in exchange for work to \$5,350. This would provide future increases in the Pell Grant scholarship in order to keep up with rising college costs.
- Provides incentives for middle and high school students by establishing the Summer of Service program and allows them to earn a \$500 award for college costs.
- Establishes Youth Engagement Zones to engage low-income high school students and out-of-school youth in volunteer efforts that address challenges in their local communities. For example, volunteering in a homeless shelter could supplement a class about poverty.
- Expands opportunities for disadvantaged youth, including doubling the resources available to engage youth with disabilities. It also encourages adults to serve as mentors for foster youth.

The bill passed 321-105 initially, and the final version of the bill that resolved differences with the Senate passed 275-149. President Obama signed the bill into law on April 21, 2009.

Vote #9 - Vision Care for Kids (H.R.577, RCV #170, Passage of the Bill to the Senate, March 31, 2009)

Why This Vote Matters

One in four school-age children has a vision problem significant enough to affect learning.^{xiv} The bill authorizes \$65 million in grants to be awarded over a period of five years to states. These funds would provide comprehensive eye examinations for low-income children who do not pass vision screening tests, giving priority to those under age 9. It also pays for treatment and eyewear to correct diagnosed vision problems.^{xv}

The bill passed 404-17. The bill was referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions in the U.S. Senate. It has yet to get a vote in that committee.

Vote #10 - Family Smoking Prevention (H.R.1256, RCV #187, Passage of the Bill to the Senate, April 2, 2009; RCV #335, Resolving Differences in the Senate Version of the Bill, June 12, 2009)

Why This Vote Matters

This bill protects children and teens by granting the Food and Drug Administration authority to regulate the advertising, marketing and manufacturing of tobacco products.^{xvi} 10% of American children and teens aged 12 to 17 say they have smoked in the last 30 days^{xvii}.

The bill passed 298-112 initially, and the final version of the bill that resolved differences with the Senate passed 307-97. President Obama signed the bill into law on June 22, 2009.

Vote #11 - Budget Resolution (H.Con.Res.85, RCV #192, Passage of the Resolution to the Senate, April 2, 2009; S.Con.Res.13, RCV #216, Resolving Differences in the Senate Version of the Resolution, April 29, 2009)

Why This Vote Matters

Every February the President proposes a detailed federal budget. The House and Senate then pass a budget resolution that sets spending caps for each house's appropriation committee. The resolution does not address specifics in the President's budget, rather it sets spending limits for the Appropriation Committees. The total amount for all non-defense discretionary programs in 2010 is \$529.8 billion, a \$29.8 billion, or 6.0 percent, increase above the level provided for 2009 when adjusted for inflation. This funds many of the priorities for children and working families outlined in the President's budget, including:

- Continuing to cut taxes for millions of families through an expansion of the Child Tax Credit.
- Making the \$2500 American Opportunity Tax Credit permanent to help kids afford college.
- Making a down payment on the President's "Zero to Five" plan: providing \$1.1 billion to double the number of children served by Early Head Start, \$1 billion to expand and improve Head Start, and \$2 billion in funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant.

- Creating the Nurse Home Visitation program, by giving states funding to provide home visits by trained nurses to first-time low-income mothers and mothers-to-be.
- Expanding Pell Grants for college students
- Rewarding excellent teachers who achieve quality performance and help for less effective teachers to improve or exit the classroom.
- Increasing health care coverage for an additional four million children.
- Strengthening nutrition assistance through a Child Nutrition and WIC reauthorization package that will help end childhood hunger by 2015.
- Responding to the needs of low-income Americans through a temporary increase in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly Food Stamps for low-income families, plus new resources for food banks.
- Preventing teen pregnancy through state, community, and faith-based efforts to reduce this problem using evidence-based models.
- Providing energy assistance to low-income families by providing \$3.2 billion for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). This helps low-income families with their home heating and cooling expenses, including a trigger for automatic increases when energy costs spike.
- Providing greater support for effective charter schools.
- Increasing funding for the Project-Based Rental Assistance Program. This preserves 1.3 million affordable rental units for low income households through increased funding for owners of multifamily properties.
- Putting 50,000 more cops on the street. This supports COPS Hiring Grants, to help states prevent crime during the economic downturn.
- Expanding national service by growing AmeriCorps from its current 75,000 slots to 250,000 and providing additional resources for Learn and Serve America in high schools, colleges and other organizations.^{xviii}

The resolution passed 233-196 initially, and the final version of the resolution that resolved differences with the Senate passed 233-193. Budget resolutions are not signed by the President.

Vote #12 - Family Self-Sufficiency Act (H.R.46, RCV #221, Passage of the Bill to the Senate, April 29, 2009)

Why This Vote Matters

The bill would expand the availability of Family Self-Sufficiency programs offered in connection with the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program by ensuring that local public housing authorities have the consistent coordinator funding necessary to administer programs and better serve their populations. These programs provide homeownership counseling, job training, child care, education, and other services to help low-income families reduce their dependence on public assistance.^{xix}

The bill passed 397-19. The bill was referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs in the U.S. Senate. It has yet to get a vote in that committee.

Vote #13 - Green Schools (H.R.2187, RCV #259, Passage of the Bill to the Senate, May 14, 2009)

Why This Vote Matters

Research shows a correlation between school facility quality and student achievement but according to recent estimates, America's schools are without the funding they need to bring them up to good condition. The 21st Century Green High-Performing Public School Facilities Act would make critical investments to modernize, upgrade and repair school facilities across the country. It authorizes \$6.4 billion for school facilities projects for fiscal year 2010 to create healthier, safer, and more energy-efficient teaching and learning climates. This legislation will improve education, create jobs, and encourage energy efficiency and the use of renewable resources in our schools.^{xx}

The bill passed 275-155. The bill was referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions in the U.S. Senate. It has yet to get a vote in that committee.

Vote #14 - Federal Employee Paid Parental Leave Act (H.R.626, RCV #310, Passage of the Bill to the Senate, June 4, 2009)

Why This Vote Matters

The federal government is the nation's top employer and currently offers no paid parental leave to its employees. Evidence shows that providing paid parental leave is good for children's health and development, boosts employee morale and productivity, and saves costs for employers by reducing turnover. Children whose parents are provided with paid leave are more likely to have regular check ups, receive immunizations, and engage in the parent-child bonding that is crucial to early childhood development.^{xxi}

This bill would provide four weeks of paid parental leave to federal employees for the birth, adoption, or fostering of a child.

The bill passed 258-154, with one member voting present. The bill was referred to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs in the U.S. Senate. It has yet to get a vote in that committee.

Vote #15 - Science and Technology Education Coordination Act (H.R.1709, RCV #312, Passage of the Bill to the Senate, June 9, 2009)

Why This Vote Matters

This bill establishes a committee under the National Science and Technology Council with the responsibility to coordinate science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education activities.

The bill passed 353-30. The bill was referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation in the U.S. Senate. It has yet to get a vote in that committee.

Vote #16 - Appropriations for the Departments of Labor, Education, and Health and Human Services (H.R.3293, RCV #646, Passage of the Bill to the Senate, July 24, 2009)

Why This Vote Matters

The appropriations bill for the Labor, Education, and Health and Human Services bill expanded funding for a variety of programs that benefit children. Highlights of these include:

- Funding President Obama's request of \$7.2 billion for Head Start
- \$20 million for a new child welfare initiative
- \$114 million for a new initiative for efforts to prevent teen pregnancy
- \$546 million for school improvement grants to turn around the nation's lowest performing schools
- Fully funding President Obama's Innovation Fund, which supports proven and promising approaches to lifting student achievement
- Expanding funding for treatment, screenings, surveillance, public awareness, and research related to autism
- Creating a teacher incentive fund
- Grants increasing charter school funding^{xxii}

The bill passed 264-153. It was combined into a conference report with appropriations for Transportation-HUD, Commerce-Justice-Science, Financial Services, Military Construction-VA; and State-Foreign Operations. This combined appropriations bill passed 221-202 with one voting "present." President Obama signed the bill into law on December 16, 2009.

Vote #17 - Higher Education and Early Learning Challenge Grants (H.R.3221, RCV #719, Passage of the Bill to the Senate, September 17, 2009)

Why This Vote Matters

While this bill focuses on higher education, it also establishes an Early Learning Challenge Fund to encourage states to establish systems for improving the quality of early learning settings for children ages birth to five and increase disadvantaged children's access to high-quality early learning programs. This bill would provide \$1 billion a year for eight years. It would establish two types of grants:

- *Quality Pathways Grants* for states that already have made significant progress toward establishing systems for improving the quality of early learning settings.
- *Development Grants* for states with some elements of an early learning system to support planning efforts.^{xxiii}

The bill passed 253-171. The bill was referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions in the U.S. Senate. It has yet to get a vote in that committee.

Vote #18 - Affordable Health Care for America Act (H.R.3962, RCV #887, Passage of the Bill to the Senate, November 7, 2009; RCV #165, Resolving Differences in the Senate Version of the Bill, March 21, 2010)

Why This Vote Matters

The health care reform bill passed by the U.S. House does a number of things that will benefit children and families. It will:

- Extend funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program and the adoption tax credit to 2015
- Allow foster care children aging out of Medicaid to retain their comprehensive coverage
- Immediately ban denial of coverage for children based on pre-existing conditions
- Expand Medicaid eligibility to children in families from 100% of poverty to 133% of poverty, covering millions of children in this comprehensive program
- Establish a Pregnancy Assistance Fund assist teenaged mothers
- Allow children to stay on their parents' health insurance until the age 26
- Add billions of dollars for community health centers, which will improve access and delivery of care for millions of children across this country
- Require coverage for basic pediatric services under all health plans as well as oral and vision coverage, which improves a child's ability to learn and perform at school
- Improve the care our nation's children receive through developing children's quality priorities and promoting children's quality measurement and reporting
- Ensure that all children have access to free preventive services under their health insurance plans and invest in prevention and public health to encourage innovations in health care that prevent illness and disease before they require more costly treatment
- Offer health insurance through an Exchange to families without job-based coverage, or are not eligible for government programs, and provide premium assistance to those who can't afford it
- Ensure through a health insurance Exchange that children have access to affordable child-only health insurance policies, regardless of whether their parents change jobs, leave a job, move, or get sick

The initial bill passed 220-215. The U.S. Senate passed their version on December 24, 2009. The final version of the bill that resolved differences with the Senate passed 219-212 and was signed into law by President Obama on March 23, 2010.

Vote #19 - Permanent Estate Tax Relief (H.R.4154, RCV #929, Passage of the Bill to the Senate, December 3, 2009)

Why This Vote Matters

Due to the tax cuts passed by Congress and signed by President Bush in 2001, the estate tax was gradually phased out, more inheritance money was excluded, and the rate of taxation went down until 2010 when no estate tax will be assessed. However, next year, it will go back to the level it was in 2001 – the first \$1 million in inheritance income would be excluded and the rest taxed at 55%. This bill passed by the House would permanently establish the estate

tax at the 2009 level – the first \$3.5 million in inheritance for an individual, and \$7 million for a couple, would be exempted and the rest taxed at a maximum 45% rate. The U.S. Senate passed an amendment that would exclude \$10 million in inheritance for a couple and tax it at a much lower rate of 35%. Given the budget and debt issues the country faces, this bill represents a responsible solution, excludes 99.8% of estates from any taxation^{xxiv}, and still provides hundreds of billions of dollar in revenue that would be lost if the estate tax was removed permanently or if the Senate’s proposal were adopted. Without an estate tax, an even greater pressure would be on to either cut children’s health, education, and safety programs, not address the unmet need of children, or raise taxes on lower and middle income families.

The bill passed 225-200. It has been placed on the Senate Legislative Calendar but has not been acted up at the time of this publication.