

# Children's Leadership Council

## "Invest in Children, Strengthen America" Clips

### States

#### *Louisiana*

##### **The Advocate: Child advocates seek tax relief**

By Allen M. Johnson

December 16, 2008

<http://www.theadvocate.com/news/36213174.html>

Child advocates say they are uniting behind national and statewide strategies to protect Louisiana children from expected government budgets and a deepening recession.

"The children's community doesn't always tend to play nicely in the sandbox," Bill Bentley, president and CEO of Voices for America's Children, told a recent gathering of nonprofit child advocacy groups at Audubon Zoo.

However, 36 nonprofit organizations nationwide — including Agenda for Children in Louisiana — have banded together to fight for scarce federal dollars in Washington.

"Children are not doing well in this country, quite frankly," Bentley said. "It's going to be a real fight."

Dubbed "Invest in Children, Strengthen America" and led by The Children's Leadership Coalition, the campaign champions short- and long-term "investment" strategies that have "proven" cost-effective at preparing healthy children for school and work.

Proposals include a new "investment" of \$70 billion over 5 years for Head Start-type programs for children ages 5 and under.

Another proposal calls for \$10 billion in new funding to improve the lives of abused children — a problem that costs society an estimated \$104 billion.

Judith Watts, president of New Orleans-based Agenda for Children, said Louisiana has long been near the bottom of national child poverty rates.

"We've been 49th (in poverty) for at least a decade or more," Watts said.

Yet, more hard times lay ahead.

“In Louisiana alone, we are currently facing a budget deficit of \$1.3 billion,” Watts said. “Sadly, the economic crisis and the cuts made to balance the budget will have a disproportionately negative impact on Louisiana children.”

Tax relief tops Agenda’s “Poor No More” policy campaign to help Louisiana families.

However, Gov. Bobby Jindal has said there will be no more tax breaks in the near future.

Louisiana’s tax code is causing single-parent families to fall deeper into poverty, said Agenda analyst Teresa Falgoust, whose annual parish-by-parish “Kids Count” report on Louisiana children is due out in February.

### **Times Picayune: Coalition will press for needs of young**

**December 13, 2008**

<http://www.nola.com/news/t-p/neworleans/index.ssf?/base/news-32/1229149343125180.xml&coll=1>

A recently formed coalition of child advocates representing 36 national organizations on Friday launched an effort to persuade Congress and the incoming Obama administration to invest more in programs that assist young people and families.

The Louisiana kickoff of the lobbying campaign will be followed by events in 12 other states, according to the coalition, the Children's Leadership Council.

Advocates for children and families held a news conference Friday afternoon at the Audubon Zoo.

The council has members in every state and includes organizations such as the National Head Start Association and Voices for America's Children.

The "Invest in Children, Strengthen America" campaign will push for policies and financing in support of physical, dental and mental health care, early childhood development programs and expanded tax credits and rental assistance for families. The campaign also will highlight a need for services for older children, including high school dropout prevention efforts and job training.

## ***Maine***

### **Portland Press Herald: Maine leaders urge investment in children**

**By A. M. Wickenheiser**

**December 17, 2008**

<http://news.maintoday.com/updates/037269.html>

Maine leaders this morning pushed for renewed investment in children's programs to lead toward economic security.

U.S. Rep.-elect Chellie Pingree, D-Maine, a representative from Republican Sen. Olympia Snowe's office and other officials spoke at a press conference at Casey Family Services in Portland, launching the Children's Leadership Council's campaign to "Invest in Children, Strengthen America."

According to a release on the conference, Pingree said that during her years in the Maine Senate, where she served as majority leader, she saw the effects of federal budget cuts on children.

"Our commitment to basic children's programs has been declining for more than a decade," she said. "We are seeing the results in higher rates of child poverty even before the economic downturn began. It's vital that we use this opportunity to stimulate the economy to also make sure children are safe, fed, and have good schools to attend."

The council has set five priorities to guide federal and state efforts in helping children:

- \* Prevention, early diagnosis and treatment for at-risk children
- \* Physical, dental, and mental health care for all children
- \* Adequate pre-school support through Head Start, child care, and high-quality kindergarten
- \* Services for older children that keep them in school and provide job training
- \* Financial security through child tax credits, child nutrition and Food Stamps, and housing assistance

"We know from experience that investing in children from the first years of life has a tremendous payoff," said Elinor Goldberg, president of the Maine Children's Alliance, a CLC member. "The evidence has only grown stronger in recent years that we need to make basic investments to ensure a strong economy."

### **WMTW News: Children's Health, Education Campaign Kicks Off**

**December 17, 2008**

<http://www.wmtw.com/news/18297113/detail.html>

PORTLAND, Maine -- The Maine Children's Alliance on Wednesday joins in the launch of a national campaign aimed at building support for stepped-up spending on programs to improve the health, education and well-being of America's kids.

Alliance President Elinor Goldberg and U.S. Rep.-elect Chellie Pingree are among the speakers scheduled to appear Wednesday morning at a campaign kickoff in Portland.

The event coincides with a week of similar events across the country in support of the Children's Leadership Council's "Invest in Children, Strengthen America" campaign.

The council is urging President-elect Obama and Congress to make a commitment to investments to prevent children from falling into poverty.

### **Portland Press Herald: Taking a stand for America's kids**

**By Giselle Goodman**

**December 17, 2008**

<http://news.maintoday.com/updates/037236.html>

Weather permitting, there will be an announcement today at Casey Family Services by the Children's Leadership Council, which is launching a campaign that will try to impress upon the incoming administration the need to invest in America's children.

The "Invest in Children, Strengthen America" campaign is backed by Chellie Pingree, U.S. Representative-elect, who will make the announcement with Elinor Goldberg, president/CEO of Maine's Children's Alliance.

According to a press release, today's 11 a.m. launch coincides with a week of similar events going on across the nation, with a national launch of the initiative scheduled for Dec. 18 at the National Press Club in Washington D.C.

### ***Minnesota***

### **Minn Post: Group to announce plan to help children in difficult economy**

**By Joe Kimball**

**December 17, 2008**

[http://www.minnpost.com/politicalagenda/2008/12/17/5351/group\\_to\\_announce\\_plan\\_to\\_help\\_children\\_in\\_difficult\\_economy](http://www.minnpost.com/politicalagenda/2008/12/17/5351/group_to_announce_plan_to_help_children_in_difficult_economy)

Finding more resources for children -- even (or especially) in this difficult economic climate -- is the goal of a new initiative to be announced Thursday by the Children's Leadership Council.

The group says the economic crisis and the cuts made to balance the state budget will have a disproportional negative impact on Midwestern children. As the job market falters and unemployment rises, more children and families face the risk of poverty, increased stress in coping with job loss and tighter budgets, increased food insecurity, the loss of health insurance, and instability in housing and child care.

It's new campaign, "Invest in Children, Strengthen America," will pull together organizations and supporters to prepare children for school, work and life and to "build the public awareness and creating the political will necessary to make greater federal investments in America's children and youth a reality."

## National

### **Media General (Richmond Times Dispatch): Economic Stimulus Starts with Youth, Advocates Say**

By Neil H. Simon  
December 18, 2008

<http://www.mgwashington.com/index.php/news/article/economic-stimulus-starts-with-youth-advocates-say/2271/>

WASHINGTON—Thirty-six national children's advocacy groups united Thursday in calling for a 2009 economic stimulus bill to include multibillion-dollar investments in youth programs – a key agenda item of Rep. Robert C. Scott.

On a conference call with reporters announcing the "Invest in Children, Strengthen America" campaign, Scott, D-3rd, said congressional debate over rebuilding roads and bridges to spur the economy must address the challenges facing the nation's troubled teens as well.

"Problems like teen pregnancy, school drop outs, drugs and gangs are all interrelated," Scott said. "The best solution is primary prevention. When you solve one you actually solve them all."

The Obama administration has floated the idea of an economic recovery bill costing as much as \$1.2 trillion to be aimed at schools, alternative energy and physical infrastructure.

Rep. Jim Moran, D-8th, said there needs to be "a parallel investment in our human infrastructure."

Leaders of the newly-created Children's Leadership Council seek money for a range of children's programs that they argue are directly linked to getting the nation's unemployed workers back on the job. High on their wish list is \$70 billion over five years for childcare and early education.

"You can't take a 2-year-old to a job interview and you can't keep a job without childcare," said Linda Smith of the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies.

Bill Bentley of Voices for America's Children said, "Our current economic problems are compounding the crisis our children are facing." He said youth investments would have an immediate economic payoff through reduced crime, less remedial education costs and less welfare dependency.

Scott, who has carried legislation focused on juvenile crime prevention, said spending on youth programs now can greatly reduce prison costs later. He cited the example of a \$2.5 million federal grant for gang prevention in Richmond, which was recently credited with reducing crime in a targeted area of the city.

Most youth programs, he said, fit the incoming administration's vision for economic stimulus investments.

"The mantra has been three Ts -- timely, temporary and targeted," Scott said. "Many of the programs we are talking about can be implemented fairly quickly."

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