



PRESS RELEASE

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NM Voices for Children Applauds House Passage of Recovery Act

ALBUQUERQUE—New Mexico Voices for Children today applauded Congress for passing economic recovery legislation that will boost the economy and provide financial relief to economically strained states and families. *The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* handily passed the U.S. House of Representatives 244-to-188.

All three members of the New Mexico delegation voted in favor of the legislation. The Senate is expected to vote on the measure next Wednesday.

"This economic recovery legislation will boost the economy and provide funding to help create jobs here in New Mexico," said Gerry Bradley, Research Director of NM Voices.

"The Recovery Act provides necessary resources for the needy children and families in our state. The bill invests in a variety of programs that will alleviate some of the economic strain currently felt by children and their families," he added.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (H.R. 1) will provide long-term, responsible investments that will keep the nation's economy growing while at the same time improving the health, education and well-being of children. Millions of working families would be aided by changes to the child tax credit, gain access to child care such as Head Start and other early childhood opportunities, receive more widespread financial aid for higher education, receive youth job training, and be able to access more health care and nutrition programs.

"Congress made a critical investment in our children and families by voting for a recovery package that will help create jobs and invest in programs that will improve the well-being of children and families in these uncertain economic times. Investing in children not only makes good economic sense, but also gives our kids a real chance to succeed in school, work and life," said Bill Bentley, CEO of Voices for America's Children, a national organization of child advocacy groups.

The recovery package invests significant federal resources in many of the programs and services that have been underfunded for the past decade. It includes many measures advantageous to families with children. NM Voices is particularly pleased with the following provisions:

- **Child Tax Credit:** Lowers the earnings threshold from its current value of \$8,500 to \$0. Reducing the earnings needed to claim the credit could benefit 13.3 million more American children than under the current earnings threshold.
- **Nutrition Assistance:** Provides a \$20 billion increase to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (or Food Stamps) and makes all states eligible to participate in the Afterschool Feeding Program for At-risk Youth, which currently only serves eight states.
- **Child Care and Head Start:** Provides \$2 billion for the Child Care Development Block Grant allowing an additional 300,000 children to participate and \$2.1 billion for Head Start, which means 110,000 low-income children will be able to access the program.
- **Medicaid (FMAP):** Includes a provision that provides a temporary increase through December 2010 in the federal share of Medicaid payments totaling approximately \$88 billion. This policy also applies to Foster Care and Adoption Assistance (so-called IV-E programs), which use FMAP to determine payment rates.
- **Unemployment Insurance:** Increases payments by \$25/week, and encourages modernization, which will allow more workers to claim benefits as more small businesses and large companies cut jobs.
- **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families:** Offers states additional funds to help states manage burgeoning caseloads due to the recession.

"We're grateful to our new House representatives for supporting this important legislation. It shows that they understand the need for investment in our nation's greatest resource – our children," said Bradley.

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New Mexico Voices for Children is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization advocating for policies to improve the health and well-being of New Mexico's children, families and communities.
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