



TAX & BUDGET POLICY: THE CHILDREN'S BUDGET ACT

WHAT IS A CHILDREN'S BUDGET?

A children's budget is a deliberate and full accounting of all the money spent on and for children. Because such spending is spread out over many departments and dozens of bureaus, there currently is no simple way to evaluate the overall level of federal investment in children. Comparing levels across years is an equally difficult task. **A children's budget would gather together the diverse sources of funding for children's programs in one place to communicate a clear picture of the federal investment in America's young people.**

WE DON'T HAVE IT BUT WE NEED IT

Are we shortchanging our children? It can be hard to tell sometimes. Some programs that benefit children have enjoyed funding increases in recent years, while others have suffered cuts. What is the overall trend for spending on kids? This a question to which every parent in America should be able to find an answer with ease. Unfortunately, even experienced policy analysts would find it extremely difficult to figure out exactly what the federal government spends for children. **Doing better for our children tomorrow starts with knowing how we're doing today.**

EASY TO IMPLEMENT, INVALUABLE TO HAVE

There are several state and local governments that currently produce a children's budget annually. These budgets give an advantage to the parents in states like Louisiana and in cities like Philadelphia by making it clear and plain how their governments are responding to the needs of children. **Children's budgets in these states and cities have proven themselves to be an invaluable source of information as well as an inexpensive and efficient way to improve the lives of all children.** At the federal level, unfortunately, no such official source of information currently exists.

THE CHILDREN'S BUDGET ACT

In the 111th Congress, Congressman Danny Davis (IL) introduced The Children's Budget Act in the House of Representatives. Senator Robert Menendez (NJ) is once again expected to introduce the measure in the United States Senate. The Act amends section 31 U.S.C. 1105 of the United States Code to require the inclusion of a Children's Budget" as part of the President's annual budget request.

The Code already includes several dozen separate, specific instructions regarding the President's annual budget request. It has been updated several times to provide more direction. Most recently, the law was changed to mandate that the President include a separate analysis of all spending on homeland security. The Children's Budget Act would be a **simple and easy** addition which will allow all Americans to judge for themselves the priority that we, as a nation, place on meeting the needs of our children.

OUR FIRST PRIORITY

We can all agree that helping our children succeed must be at the top of our national priorities. Children make up one-quarter of our population, but they are all of our future. Meeting their needs requires commitment and dedication. It also requires that we take stock of our current efforts, but the absence of a clear Children's Budget makes it hard to do so. If we have the opportunity to take simple, inexpensive action to better understand the national commitment to children, shouldn't we do so?

First Focus is a bipartisan advocacy organization that is committed to making children and their families a priority in federal policy and budget decisions.



FIRST FOCUS

MAKING CHILDREN & FAMILIES THE PRIORITY