



CHILDREN'S  
ACTION  
ALLIANCE

news

January 2005

Opening The Doors of Opportunity for Arizona's Children & Families

## United Effort Needed To Build A State Budget That Protects Children's Health, Safety And Education

A variety of social issues promise to generate extraordinary attention and controversy during the 2005 legislative session. But the legislative vote that will matter most to Arizona families every day will be the vote on the state budget. Because so many policies and services are wrapped up into the budget, this vote can expand opportunities, strengthen families, and build healthy communities for our future.

Creating and adopting that kind of budget won't be easy. Although job growth is slowly improving and state revenues aren't falling anymore, our growing population and changing economy affect our fiscal responsibilities: the number of K-12 students is growing faster than our overall population, fewer and fewer Arizonans can get health insurance through their jobs, the number of prison inmates is growing 57% faster than overall state population.

There are real solutions to these challenges. Across the state, families and communities are pulling together to give our children a better education, school facilities and technology that help them learn, access to health care, and the right start from parents and child care teachers when it matters most. Governor Napolitano and state legislators can craft a budget that fuels this energy and moves Arizona to a healthier future.

Here are three key budget issues for children and families:

### CHILD CARE:

Beginning in March 2003, state funding shortfalls have turned thousands of young children away from affordable child care. Today, there are more than 1,000 children who are left out. But if our state lawmakers don't act, that number will multiply tenfold by the end of next fiscal year.

That would be the equivalent of 500 kindergarten classes starting school behind. Increased state funding is needed so that hardworking parents can keep their jobs to support their families without turning to welfare. And the funding is needed to give qualified parents choices for safe, licensed care and education for their young children.



### CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT:

For the past several years, Arizona's Child Protective Services system didn't have enough staff or services to keep up with the cries for help from abused and neglected children. And Arizonans read far too many newspaper headlines about the resulting real life horror stories of children left to suffer terrible abuse and neglect.

In a special legislative session in the fall of 2003, lawmakers passed reforms and funding to better protect abused and neglected children and to do a better job finding them safe and permanent homes. Changes were made to reduce Child Protective Services caseloads and to keep up with the growing number of children needing foster care. Lawmakers from both parties called these changes important accomplishments. But because of the budget decisions made in 2004, we are already falling behind again.

Reports of child abuse increased 13% last year. And the number of children in foster care grew by 20% – more than ten times faster than our overall population. These young victims have nowhere else to turn. It is our responsibility to provide state funding for the staff and services to protect their safety and give them a chance for a productive future.

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IT'S ONLY FAIR



Have you played the game of monopoly? How would you or your kids like to play this game without getting \$200 when you pass go?

Wouldn't you complain that this isn't fair; that you'd have a much harder time than the other players to "buy" Boardwalk or Park Place?

Well, you'd be right. As Americans and as Arizonans we believe that self-reliance and personal responsibility are important qualities. We also believe that the doors of opportunity should be open to us all.

For the past 30 years, the child care subsidy program in Arizona has kept those doors open for tens of thousands of children living in working families by making licensed child care affordable for families earning \$25,000 or less. For the past 30 years, state and federal funding for child care has provided parents with opportunities to keep working to support their families without turning to welfare or placing their kids in unsafe places. And the funding has given qualified parents choices for safe, licensed care and education for their young children. This has helped level the playing field for children to succeed.

Yet, beginning in March 2003 due to state budget decisions, thousands of young children have been turned away from affordable child care. Today, there are more than 1,000 children who are left out. But if our state lawmakers don't act, that number will multiply tenfold by the end of next fiscal year. That would be the equivalent of 500 classes of kindergarten students starting school behind.

Who are these kids? They are the children of a mom who has graduated with an AA degree and has been offered a job as an administrative assistant in your company, but can't take the job because she can't afford child care. They are the children of the father who has been working part time and going to school, whose wife has just died of cancer, and who has no family around to help. And they are the children of the mother who is a victim of domestic violence and is fleeing her abusive husband to give herself and her kids a fresh start.

And what is happening to these children without safe and nurturing child care? Some of them manage to get by. Their parents cope by patching together neighbors and friends to care for them, and, if they're very, very lucky, they have a grandparent or a relative that takes on the responsibility. But for far too many families, these options simply don't exist.

Thousands of Arizona's youngest citizens, from hardworking families, find themselves shuffled around without any security. And other families have to give up on their jobs and their quest for economic independence and turn to welfare instead. Both options undermine the stability of families and leave children without that \$200 they need to have a fair chance of winning.

There is an answer. Arizonans can make our state a place where kids have a decent chance to succeed. Increased state funding is needed to stop turning away thousands of children and to keep up with our growing population. We need to convince our policymakers that they should level the playing field with their child care budget decisions.

There is no higher value in our state than the idea of opportunity for all. And child care brings this value to life by helping parents keep working and stay off welfare; keeping kids safe and nurtured; giving parents choices; and, ideally, laying the foundation for success in school. We should end the child care "waiting list" because children's lives can't be put on hold. They need a fair start beginning today.

Carol Kamin is President/CEO of Children's Action Alliance.

## CAA Symposium Highlights Positive Futures For Disconnected Youth

CAA brings together policymakers, community organizations, and citizen leaders for a luncheon symposium on *Connecting Disconnected Youth* Friday, January 21, 2005 at the Hyatt Regency hotel in Phoenix. Disconnected youth are not in school and not working; they are unprepared to be contributing, productive members of our communities.

The symposium features Patrick McCarthy, Vice President for System and Service Reform at The Annie E. Casey Foundation. The Casey Foundation is a national philanthropic leader in building better futures for disadvantaged children through community initiatives, data-driven research, and policy development.

Teens and young adults who come of age in foster care or are involved in the juvenile justice system experience a particularly tough transition to adulthood. These youth who are disconnected from their families and communities face prospects of school failure, homelessness, joblessness, and poverty. The symposium will focus on addressing these challenges to achieve positive results.

The cost of the symposium is \$30 per person. For tickets or more information, please contact Beth Rosenberg at 602-266-0707 or [brosenberg@azchildren.org](mailto:brosenberg@azchildren.org)

## David Bartlett

David Bartlett is the newest board member of Children's Action Alliance, but he is not a newcomer to our advocacy work. He has chaired CAA's Southern Arizona advisory committee for a number of years, and brings with him a broad array of experience.

David worked for the Arizona Attorney General's Office for eleven years, serving as Chief Counsel of the Civil Rights Section and Special Counsel for Tucson and Southern Arizona.

David has also been involved in public policy as an elected official. He served in the Arizona House of Representatives for six years, then moved to the State Senate for four years. In the Senate he served as Judiciary Chair and Majority Whip.

According to David, his experience as a legislator helped him understand the importance of CAA and its advocacy efforts. "My commitment to CAA stems from my understanding of the leading role the organization plays in advocating for Arizona's kids."

In addition to his involvement with CAA, David serves as a member of the Arizona Heritage Alliance. Last year he served on Governor Napolitano's Citizen's Finance Review Commission. David is a graduate of Georgetown University Law Center and the University of Arizona. He has been recognized for his civic involvement, receiving public service awards from the Arizona Center for Law in the Public Interest and Arizona Common Cause.

## New Children's Action Alliance Staff Ready For 2005

Kim VanPelt is CAA's new Director of Health Policy. Prior to joining CAA, Kim served as Strategic Planning Manager at the Arizona Department of Health Services. In that position, she was responsible for developing the agency's strategic plan, researching policy and organizational issues, and acting as agency representative on numerous interagency committees.

Kim previously served as an analyst for the Office of the Auditor General for six years, reviewing a wide array of government programs for the Arizona Legislature. Kim received her Masters in Public Administration from the Nelson A. Rockefeller School of Public Affairs and Policy at the State University of New York at Albany.

Matt Jewett joined CAA in October as a Research Associate. Matt's work for CAA includes legislative and policy research, constituent training, and public speaking.

Prior to joining CAA, Matt served as a Civil Rights Compliance Officer for the Arizona Attorney General's Office. He previously worked as an analyst in the Governor's Office, an interim staff assistant for Congressman Ed Pastor, and as a political organizer.

Matt holds a Bachelors of Arts degree from the University of Arizona, and has completed advanced coursework in Spanish.

CAA is proud to congratulate Elizabeth Hudgins on her promotion to Vice President for Policy and Research. Elizabeth joined CAA eight years ago as a Research Associate and quickly became an expert in Arizona welfare reform issues as well as budget and tax analysis. In her new position Elizabeth will help to shape CAA's advocacy strategies.



## Become An Advocate!

You can help Children's Action Alliance make a difference in improving the lives of children and their families. Join our E-mail Alert network or make a tax-deductible donation by completing and returning this form. Thank you for helping Arizona's children.

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## Enrolling Kids in Health Coverage... It Can Start with Lunch

In November, Children's Action Alliance was awarded a grant from the Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust to link KidsCare outreach and enrollment to the free and reduced-price school lunch programs in two Valley school districts.

Arizona currently ranks 47th nationally in children's health care coverage. While progress has been made in recent years through the creation of KidsCare, more needs to be done to "close the gap" in children's health care coverage.

Most of the children who qualify for the school lunch program also qualify for KidsCare. But thousands of these children remain uninsured because their parents don't know about KidsCare or don't know how to apply. By linking KidsCare applications with the well established school lunch program that parents are already familiar with, CAA hopes to bring health coverage to many more children. The aim of the project is to create an effective outreach model that can be replicated in school districts throughout the state.



## Southern CAA Working For Juvenile Justice

Kids are different. Everyone who has ever lived with a teenager knows it, and in most circumstances, Arizona law recognizes it, too. Medical and brain research increasingly reveals that adolescents' brains are immature and their capacity for decision making is undeveloped. Yet, in the face of this understanding, Arizona still permits the execution of children who commit crimes when they are 16 or 17 years old.

Penelope Jacks, director of Children's Action Alliance Southern Arizona, has for the last three years chaired a community coalition to advocate for legislation to eliminate the juvenile death penalty. (If this legislation passes, judges would continue to be able to sentence juvenile offenders to life in prison without the possibility of parole.) Several hearings have been held in both the Arizona House and Senate and the coalition has made presentations to legislators, community groups, and religious leaders. While legislation has not yet passed, attitudes toward the death penalty for children are changing.

Recently, the U.S. Supreme Court heard a case arguing that the juvenile death penalty violates the 8th Amendment prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment. Children's Action Alliance joined hundreds of other children's organizations, religious leaders, and physicians in signing an Amicus brief urging the Court to abolish the death penalty for juveniles.

## Closing the Gap on Children's Health Care Coverage

In August, Children's Action Alliance issued *Within Our Reach: Closing the Gap in Children's Health Care Coverage*. The report highlights Arizona's progress in reducing the rate of uninsured children. From 1998 to 2000, the rate of uninsured children dropped from 25 percent to 18 percent. The creation of KidsCare, expansion of Medicaid coverage with Proposition 204, administrative simplification, and innovative outreach efforts have all contributed to the reduction.

The report notes that while health coverage has improved, Arizona still faces a significant gap. Indeed, Arizona ranks 47 among the 50 states in children's health care coverage. The report identifies several recommendations that would help close this gap:

- Sustain existing AHCCCS and KidsCare health coverage for Arizona's families
- Limit the premiums and co-payments required for these insurance programs
- Simplify the renewal process for AHCCCS and KidsCare
- Connect KidsCare/Medicaid outreach to enrollment in school lunch programs, child care centers, and unemployment insurance
- Expand efforts to help small businesses identify affordable insurance

While we await the Supreme Court ruling, a bill to eliminate the juvenile death penalty will be introduced again in the 2005 Arizona legislative session. We look forward to the time when Arizona can punish offenders and protect the public without ignoring the physical, mental, and emotional immaturity of youth.

# Formula For Failure: Why Arizona Shouldn't Follow Colorado

In 1992, Colorado adopted TABOR (the misnamed Taxpayer Bill of Rights). This permanent formula leads to many unintended consequences by preventing state appropriations from growing faster than state population growth and overall inflation, or state revenues, whichever is less.

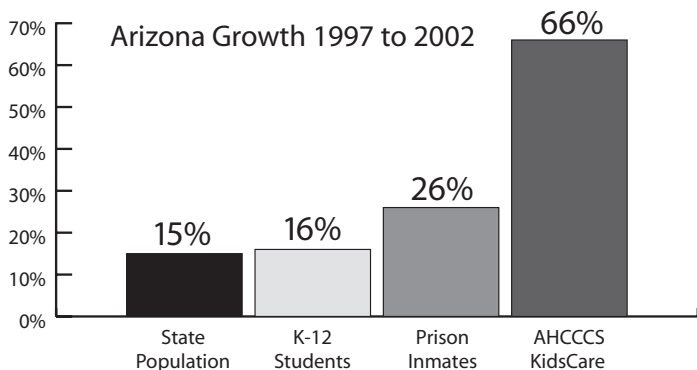
Since adopting this ill-conceived measure, Colorado has cut investments for education, public health, safety and other services. Per pupil K-12 spending has fallen 11% and, as a percentage of personal income, investment in higher education is down 55%. Despite the worst childhood immunization rate in the country, funding for vaccines was slashed half a million dollars in 2004.

This is not a model that promotes good budget decisions. In February 2003, *Governing Magazine* said that TABOR "has crippled Colorado's representative government when it comes to fiscal issues." The simple fact is that statewide population growth and inflation are not accurate measures of the cost of state services. For example, student population can grow much faster than overall population and health care costs rise faster than overall inflation.

Colorado's artificial restrictions are unnecessary for Arizona. Arizona's Constitution already requires a 2/3 vote by the legislature for any revenue increase or fee increase and already limits state appropriations of certain state revenues in any year to 7.41% of state personal income. Actual taxes have stayed well below that limit.

Any additional formula limit would hand-cuff Arizona to the past and prevent us from moving forward. With TABOR in place, Arizona couldn't leap on new opportunities like KidsCare or handle new challenges like Homeland Security.

Voters and lawmakers who care about the future of children and families should be on the look-out for Arizona versions of TABOR popping up at the legislature this year and moving directly to the 2006 ballot.



## State Budget *continued from page 1*

### CHILDREN'S HEALTH CARE:

KidsCare provides health insurance to children in working families because thousands of parents can't get health coverage through their jobs. Health insurance gives children better access to medical care, more regular check-ups and immunizations, and better health outcomes. Partly thanks to KidsCare, Arizona has achieved a 40% improvement in children's health coverage since 1997 - two times better than the national improvement.

But new state budget issues threaten this success. Recently, state lawmakers increased the monthly premiums for low-income families enrolled in KidsCare. This price increase puts coverage out of reach for many families and will reverse the progress we have made. Between July and October 2004, more than 3,000 children already lost KidsCare due to the higher premiums.

The KidsCare premiums do nothing to bolster Arizona's fiscal health because more than 77 cents of every premium dollar collected leaves Arizona and goes straight to the federal treasury. This year's state budget should reverse the premium increase. With an impact of only one-hundredth of one percent of Arizona's \$7 billion budget, we can give thousands of children a chance for a healthy future.

These budget goals are possible, but only with your help. Community voices, action, and involvement are crucial ingredients. Join CAA and thousands of parents, grandparents, employers, teachers, religious congregations, and community leaders to make sure our elected leaders know the family values we expect to see in the next state budget.

## Colorado Leader Says TABOR Doesn't Work

To learn more about TABOR and what you can do, join CAA for a luncheon symposium February 10th. The featured speaker will be Brad Young, former Republican Chair of the Appropriations Committee in the Colorado House of Representatives.

Thursday, February 10, 2005  
11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.  
Phoenix Airport Marriott  
1101 North 44th Street  
Registration: \$20

For additional information and registration please call 602-266-0707.

# Donors

The work of Children's Action Alliance is made possible through the support of hundreds of individuals, organizations, businesses and foundations. We gratefully acknowledge your contribution toward sustaining and strengthening the voice for Arizona's children. Listed below are those who have contributed \$35 or more between October 1, 2003, and October 31, 2004. Without you, there would be no voice.

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## Courts Need Resources To Protect Abused And Neglected Children

The Child Protective Services system (CPS) has attracted much-needed interest from the media and policymakers over the past two years as we work to better protect children from abuse and neglect. Arizona's courts also play a significant role in protecting child victims and moving them into safe and permanent home. But court policies and funding have not gotten the same attention from lawmakers.

As part of our work with the *Fostering Results* initiative of the Pew Charitable Trusts, Children's Action Alliance is highlighting the needs and challenges facing the juvenile courts. Our new report, *Arizona Juvenile Courts: Working to Improve Outcomes for Abused and Neglected Children*, describes the two major responsibilities of the juvenile court in child abuse cases: 1) holding CPS accountable to fulfill their duty for the safety and permanency of each child and 2) determining whether parents can safely care for their children. The court's role is not a one-time decision, but an ongoing oversight responsibility involving changing situations over an extended period of time.

During the 2003 Special Legislative Session on child abuse and neglect, the state legislature raised the statutory expectations for both CPS and the courts to do a better job protecting abused and neglected children. CPS received increased funding to better handle growing numbers of children in the system. However, the courts received no new funding.

The number of dependent children under the court's supervision grew by 18% from fiscal year 2003 to fiscal year 2004. As a result, Arizona courts are now struggling to provide timely and quality protection for abused and neglected children with both a growth in caseload and new obligations. This is a part of the system lawmakers can no longer ignore if they expect better results in protecting children from abuse.

## Donors Make A Difference For Children And Families

Ellen and Larry Katz believe that life should and can be better for Arizona kids and families. Both would like to see Arizona's ranking on child well-being improved and believe that those who have the means to do so should help to make that happen.

The Katzs' have made Arizona their home since 1975. Larry is a partner at Steptoe and Johnson Law firm and Ellen is a psychologist practicing at Boswell Memorial and Dell E. Webb Hospitals in Sun City.

This couple's philanthropic spirit is guided by a strong belief that "Arizona lags behind other states in charitable work. There is enough affluence in this state to see that families and children have the basics—a place to call home, enough to eat, and an opportunity to learn." Larry and Ellen Katz are making a difference for Arizona kids through their generous gift to CAA and to other service organizations in our community.

## "Through The Eyes Of A Child" Gala Celebrates Kids

A celebration of the joys of childhood combined with a commitment to improve the health, education, and security of Arizona's children brought more than 350 people to the Doubletree Paradise Valley Resort in October for CAA's sixth annual *Through the Eyes of a Child* gala. Chaired by Bill Post, the event raised more than \$115,000 for CAA's research and advocacy work for Arizona's children and families.

CAA Board member Fred DuVal presented the Jacque Steiner Public Leadership Award for Children to Governor Janet Napolitano in honor of her steadfast leadership to protect children from abuse and neglect and to strengthen children's education and health care.

The Honorable Maurice Portley presented the Horace Steele Child Advocacy Award to Roger Hughes, executive director of St. Luke's Health Initiatives. Roger has skillfully shaped a philanthropic mission that draws on research, advocacy, and community mobilization to expand access to health care for children and adults.

Guests enjoyed a silent auction of children's art, a recording of a song composed and performed by Roger Hughes, and lively performances by the Ahwatukee Children's Theatre, including a memorable dance number with Governor Napolitano.



Bill Post, Carol Kamin, Governor Napolitano, and Roger Hughes enjoy the youth art auction.

## Publications Available From Children's Action Alliance

**NEW!** *Beyond Kissing Babies: Transforming Campaign Sound bites into Common Sense Solutions for Arizona's Kids & Families* - briefing book on key issues affecting Arizona children and recommended action steps state legislators can take to strengthen families.

**NEW!** *Tax Cuts Don't Buy Much* - research bulletin highlights facts about tax issues likely to come up in the 2005 legislature.

**NEW!** *Within Our Reach: Closing the Gap in Children's Health coverage* - report describes Arizona's success in covering more kids and recommends steps to further reduce the rate of uninsured children.

**NEW!** *State of Working Arizona* - eight-page bulletin explains statistics and trends affecting working families including wages, incomes, and the rising cost of housing and child care.

**NEW!** *Arizona Juvenile Courts: Working to Improve Outcomes for Abused and Neglected Children* - report describes the role of the juvenile court in protecting children and highlights past, present, and future challenges.

*KIDS COUNT 2004 Data Book* - ranks Arizona compared to other states on ten indicators of conditions for children.

For a complete list of CAA publications or to order a publication, please visit our website at [www.azchildren.org](http://www.azchildren.org) or call us at 602-266-0707

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## Mark Your Calendar

for CAA's Annual Meeting and the presentation of the 2005 Champion for Children Award on March 10 at 5:30 p.m.!



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