Most priority legislation to open doors of opportunity for children and families didn’t get very far during the 2002 legislative session as the $1 billion state budget deficit overshadowed all other issues. Thanks to the voices of parents, religious congregations, business leaders, and community organizations, many vital services for kids and families will continue. But state agencies will struggle to meet growing needs with shrinking resources.

The legislative session neglected key legislation that would have helped more Arizona children thrive. The state senate passed a bill to increase unemployment insurance benefits so that families hardest hit by the economic downturn can avoid complete financial crisis (see the vote on page 7 and the article on page 4). Despite the fact that Arizona has among the lowest unemployment benefits in the nation and a $1 billion trust fund that can afford an increase, the House refused to hear the bill.

Lawmakers also failed to adopt legislation to count preschool and full-day kindergarten students in Students FIRST, raise child care subsidy rates, or create a state board for school readiness. We need a vigorous effort from voters across the state to convince our new governor and legislature that we elect them to do more than balance the books; we expect our leaders to help parents give their children the health, education, safety, and security they need to make tomorrow’s Arizona second to none.

STATE BUDGET TAKES THE SHORT-TERM VIEW

Lawmakers used a combination of spending cuts, fund shifts, accounting adjustments, and financing for new school construction to balance the fiscal year 2003 budget. These strategies may get us through the immediate budget deficit, but they do nothing to build a responsible, balanced budget for the future.

In many areas, state funding falls far below what is needed to prepare our future workforce and leaders. Child care subsidies are four years out of date. Funding for after school programs that keep young people out of trouble is gone. Prevention programs that successfully help struggling parents never reach more than a fraction of families who need them and may disappear completely. Thousands of child care businesses continue to go without the required annual inspection to make sure they are healthy and safe. Parent support services that help protect abused and neglected children have been cut. Resources to help enroll children in KidsCare health coverage have vanished. And Students FIRST provides no space or funding for full-day kindergarten or preschool programs that help children start school ready to learn.

Arizona has many viable fiscal options to allow us to address these challenges. (Several of these options were presented in Reliable Revenues for Responsible Budgets, a research bulletin from CAA now available on our website, www.azchildren.org.) We need to consider all of these options so that we can help families climb the ladder of opportunity in the years to come.

LICENSING LAWS IMPROVED TO PROTECT CHILDREN

Thanks to the leadership of Governor Hull, Senator Chris Cummiskey, and Representative Deb Gullett, lawmakers removed a dangerous loophole from state licensing law.

(Continued on Page 5)
COMMENTARY

It's time to expect Arizona's leaders to go Beyond Kissing Babies

Arizona's kids rank low on the most common gains made in the past decade as the state budget deficit overshadows efforts to open doors of opportunity to children and families. Undoubtedly, our state is in a tight fiscal situation. While Arizona has one of the steepest deficits in the nation, recent analysis of Census data reveals no state in the nation spends less per person than Arizona. In fact, Arizona spends 25 percent less than the national average on state and local government operating expenses.

Despite Arizona's lean spending, the recent legislative discussions about the fiscal year 2002 and 2003 budgets focused on the need to reduce spending even more. As this newsletter is going to press, child care subsidies are four years out of date; after school programs that keep kids out of trouble will be eliminated; parent support services that help keep abused and neglected kids safe will be slashed; and space for preschool and full-day kindergarten students will continue to be ignored by Students FIRST in recent months, I have been asked why, given the need to work harder to protect the programs that we've supported in the past, CAA has become so involved with tax reform issues? The answer has become obvious: advocacy around policies affecting kids makes little difference without adequate resources to support those policies. A variety of studies have pointed out weaknesses in our tax system. And the budget crisis has made us face up to the fact that Arizona's fiscal structure is inadequate to meet the needs of Arizona's economy and state services. We now have a rare opportunity to make needed changes in our tax system that will result in greater investment in our children.

It is also a time of rare opportunity because in November, we will elect a new governor, 90 state legislators, 8 representatives in Congress and other statewide officials. These elections will profoundly affect the lives of Arizona's children. But kids can't vote. It's up to all of us to be their political voice.

We need to tell candidates that kissing babies is not enough. We need specific, realistic plans that will help parents give their children the health, education, safety and security they need to thrive and succeed. And, we need to know how they will use the resources necessary to make this happen.

CAA recently published Reliable Resources for Responsible Budgets, a bulletin that lays out a menu of options which illustrate that Arizona has many choices other than cutting vital programs and services, and that these choices represent sound fiscal policy. A copy of the bulletin is available by calling CAA at (602) 266-0707 or visiting our website at www.archildren.org.

We need to stop feeling grateful when state appropriations do nothing more than allow us to maintain the status quo. We are not helpless, and we have choices. One of our most important choices is to elect people to office who are prepared to address the need for balanced, stable and adequate revenue to give substance to the promise "to leave no child behind."

It's time to expect Arizona's leaders to go Beyond Kissing Babies.

Building a Stronger Voice for Arizona's Children


Moderator Pat McMahon will help us quiz the candidates on their policies and plans to affect the lives of children and families throughout our communities.

The Forum begins at 5:00 p.m. on October 1, 2002 at the Herberger Theater in downtown Phoenix.

Tickets are $10 each with scholarships available. Call us at (602) 266-0707 to reserve your tickets today.

Together, we can put children at the top of Arizona's public agenda.

BOARD PROFILES

People Who Care

BRENDA SPERDUTI

Brenda currently serves as co-chair of Through the Eyes of a Child, CAA's annual fundraising gala. She got involved with community issues, including the availability of quality child care, while managing philanthropic contributions for American Express.

In 1999, she took her current position with Wells Fargo, where she has focused community giving to support their major areas of concern, including improved education for children and affordable housing for families.

Brenda is involved with diverse advocacy groups, including the Phoenix Arts Commission and the Phoenix Women's Commission.

Christine Wilkinson

Christine currently serves as co-chair of CAA's major gifts campaign. As Vice President for Student Affairs at Arizona State University, she brings a wealth of experience and knowledge about the educational needs of our children and young adults.

Christine said she was pleased to join the CAA board because "children and families should be, without question, at the top of everyone's agenda. We must do more to educate ourselves and others about the future quality of life and leadership of our state - our children. Children's Action Alliance's dedication to educate and advocate for children and the well-being of families as a whole, is well known, and I am pleased to join this dynamic board and its extremely important mission."

Christine possesses incredible energy. She serves as chair of the American Red Cross national convention cabinet and sits on the boards of Teach for America, St. Joseph Foundation, Tempe Sports Authority and the Phoenix Symphony. She has received ASU's Award of Merit, the Alumni Achievement Award, the CASE award for excellence in teaching, the volunteer of the year award for the Tempe Salvation Army board, the educator of the year award by the YWCA of Phoenix, and the outstanding community leadership award from the Tempe Chamber of Commerce.

We are honored and privileged to have Christine join the Board.

INSIDE CAA

CAA is pleased to welcome Jacque Steiner as the New President of our Board of Directors. Jacque has been with CAA since its inception and has been an active leader, serving as chair of our Child Welfare Committee, Secretary of the Board, and chair of last year's Through the Eyes of a Child fundraising event.

Jacque brings to CAA an inexhaustible commitment to children and a wealth of knowledge in the issues that affect them.

With admiration and appreciation, we thank outgoing President Nadine Mathis Basha. Her leadership, resolve and dedication have helped keep CAA vibrant and healthy. Nadine remains on the Board as Past President.

We are also pleased to welcome two new staff members to our team. Scott Burch joined CAA in April as the Program Associate for Research. Although he is new to CAA, Scott is no stranger to child advocacy, having worked previously in child care outreach through Summe Associates.

Tami Engram joined CAA in May as Administrative Assistant. Tami most recently worked for Washington Mutual Bank and brings a wide range of skills and great enthusiasm to her work at CAA.
Arizona’s Billion-Dollar Blunder

Arizona blew a $1 billion opportunity this legislative session to help thousands of families.

Thousands of Arizona families are out of work and struggling right now due to the economic downturn. And helping families make ends meet makes good economic sense. That’s why Congress expanded unemployment insurance as part of the economic stimulus package. Unemployment insurance reform is also good for kids and families.

Kids do well when their families do well.

Unemployment Insurance (UI) provides income to those who are temporarily between jobs. To get benefits, an individual must have an established work history and be looking for a new job.

Unemployment insurance is supposed to be a bridge to keep families out of financial crisis when they are in between jobs. But, Arizona’s bridge is far too rickety and that means kids suffer the damaging consequences of extreme family stress, losing their homes, and even going hungry.

3. The maximum weekly benefit in Arizona is only $205.
4. Only Mississippi and Alabama have lower weekly payments.
5. Just 28 percent of Arizona’s unemployed workers receive UI benefits while they are searching for new jobs. The national average is 43 percent.

Arizona has a billion-dollar trust fund that can only be used to pay UI benefits. At current levels, the trust fund could pay out benefits for 20 months if not another dime was deposited in the fund. This is one of the healthiest trust funds in the entire country.

A bill sponsored this session by Senator Cirillo would have increased the maximum benefit to $300 per week and helped more families be eligible for benefits. Many business organizations opposed the bill saying that it would be too expensive and force them to lay off employees. But the facts tell a very different story.

6. Arizona businesses enjoy the fourth lowest effective UI tax rate in the nation.
7. Arizona’s tax rate has been cut in half since the mid-1990s.
8. The Department of Economic Security (the agency that administers UI) estimates that the average cost to employers of the increase proposed by Senator Cirillo’s bill would have been $25 per year per employee, or 7 cents per day once the benefit increase was fully phased in. And this amount would not fully kick in until 2007. There would be absolutely no tax increase until 2004.

The U.S. Department of Labor estimates that every $1 paid out in UI benefits has a $2.15 ripple effect in the economy as people can afford to buy groceries, pay rent and utility bills, and meet other expenses.

9. The federal government just deposited $144 million into Arizona’s UI trust fund. Instead of helping families, this money will now go to cutting taxes for businesses.

In these past challenging months, when so many Americans have pulled together in so many ways, it’s hard to believe that Arizona employers wouldn’t be willing to pay less than a dime a day per employee to help families who are unemployed. CAA will be working with the media and policy makers to get the facts straight and improve our unemployment insurance system next year.

Local Advocates Honored With National Awards

Children’s Action Alliance is honored to announce that two of our staunchest advocates, state Senator Susan Gander and the Margaret T. Morris (MTM) Foundation, received national awards last month for their commitment to Arizona’s children.

The National Association of Child Advocates will honor Senator Gander with a Leadership in Government Child Advocacy Award in San Antonio on June 24. At the same ceremony, the MTM Foundation will receive the Leadership in Philanthropy Child Advocacy Award.

Senator Gander, a Republican, has served in the state legislature for 13 years. In spite of a very challenging social and political environment, she effectively led efforts for more progressive health policies and for investment in prevention and intervention programs.

MTM, a small foundation based in Prescott, has provided seed funding and ongoing support for various programs that help Arizona’s most vulnerable children. They continue to support community-based initiatives, such as transitional independent living for runaway youth and Court Appointed Special Advocates for abused and neglected children.

People like Senator Gander and organizations like the MTM Foundation are the cornerstone of efforts to open the doors of opportunity to Arizona’s children and families. CAA congratulates them both on this well-deserved recognition.

Annual Meeting

Ginny Hildebrand, Executive Director of the Association of Arizona Food Banks, accepts the Children’s Action Alliance 2002 Champion for Children Award from CAA Executive Director Carol Kamin (right), new board President Jacque Steiner (far left) and Past President Nadine Mathis Basha (left). More than 100 CAA friends and supporters attended the event, which was held March 7 at the University Club in Phoenix.

KIDSCOUNT

Slight Improvement Not Good Enough

In May, the Annie E. Casey Foundation released the 2002 KIDS COUNT Data Book ranking all 50 states on key measures of child well-being. Compared to last year, Arizona showed improvement in a few areas. Arizona’s overall ranking improved from 45 to 43 resulting from decreases in child death rates and teen death rates. However, Arizona continues to have the worst rate of high school dropouts, the fourth worst teen birth rate and the tenth worst child poverty rate in the nation. This report shows that Arizona clearly needs to try harder to reach our goal of leaving no child behind.

Where Does Arizona Rank?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall Ranking</th>
<th>43</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent of teens who are high school dropouts</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teen birth rate</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of children without health insurance</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child death rate</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teen death rate</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of children in poverty</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data from 2002 KIDS COUNT Data Book published by the Annie E. Casey Foundation using 1999 data.
Voting for Kids

The 2007 Legislative session was a difficult one, as the state’s fiscal crisis exacerbated efforts to introduce important bills for kids and families. Among the bills CAA supported were measures to license boot camps and increase unemployment insurance benefits.

HB 2610

Despite this difficulty, some progress was made in protecting vulnerable children in “boot camp.” Last summer, 14-year-old Anthony Hayes died of heat exposure and drowning while in the care of an unlicensed, private boot camp. This case came to light from licensing requirements. HB 2610 requires boot camps to follow the same licensing requirements as other agencies that provide care or treatment for children.

SB 1280

A measure to expand unemployment insurance benefits was successful in the Senate, but was never given a hearing in the House. Arizona has among the lowest UI benefits in the nation. Only Mississippi and Alabama have lower weekly payments, and our coverage reaches fewer unemployed workers than any state except Louisiana. CAA recognizes the critical role these benefits play in helping a family avoid financial crisis when parents are between jobs. Despite this year’s set-back, we will keep this issue high on our list of priorities.

The following table illustrates the voting record of state legislators on the CAA-related bills.

For information on additional legislative action affecting children and families, please see the story on Page 1 or visit the Legislative Summary section of the CAA web site at www.archildren.org.

Save the Date!

CAA’s annual Through the Eyes of a Child Gala will be held at the Scottsdale Center for the Arts on September 14. Through the Eyes of a Child is the premier fundraiser helping to support CAA’s continuing battle to convince Arizona’s policymakers and citizens that keeping our children healthy, free from abuse and neglect, ready for school and well-educated is not just the right thing to do; it is the smartest investment we can make in our future.

Through the Eyes of a Child is an evening dedicated to celebrating the child in all of us. Student performances and a silent auction of youth art remind us of the great potential our children have, and the need to ensure that every child has what he or she needs to live up to that potential.

For more information about sponsorship or tickets, please contact the CAA office at (602) 266-0707 or visit our website at www.archildren.org.

Community Partners Continue Outreach for Health Care Coverage

With the elimination of state funding for KidsCare outreach and the conclusion of several private outreach grants, Arizona was on the verge of losing most efforts to help uninsured children get health care coverage. Fortunately, many of those efforts have been renewed, particularly thanks to a four-year, $1.2 million grant to CAA from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

The grant, called Covering Kids and Families, will allow Children’s Action Alliance and the Healthy Children and Families Coalition to build on past outreach success for KidsCare and to implement a variety of new strategies to help both children and adults get coverage through KahunaCare and ACAHCW.

We are building on our outreach projects through schools and community events.

The coalition will also work to reach uninsured adults through disease support groups, parish nurses, and pharmacies. Community partners include Yuma County Health Department, Phoenix Day Child Development Center, El Rio Community Health Center, Healthy Arizona, and Lake Powell Medical Center.

With support from the Governor’s Division for Children we are also launching an intense effort to help child care centers and homes connect parents with health insurance. The health plans are also reaching out to uninsured Arizona in a number of ways, including distributing health insurance information at swap meets and planning a back-to-school health fair in Phoenix.

Who’s for Kids and Who’s Just Kidding?

In November, Arizonans will go to the polls to select all of our state leaders. These elections will profoundly affect the lives of Arizona’s children. But kids can’t vote. It is up to each individual to be their voice; to tell politicians that kissing babies is not enough. To build a better quality of life, we need specific, realistic plans that will help parents give their children the health, education, safety and security they need to make tomorrow’s Arizona second to none.

This election season, you can ask candidates tough questions and check their answers. Who’s for Kids and Who’s Just Kidding? gives you facts and questions you can use to find out the candidates’ positions on issues affecting children. These questions can be used at candidate forums in letters and phone calls to candidates.

For a copy of the brochure, call us at (602) 266-0707, or visit our website at www.archildren.org.

Efforts Grow to Help Kids Start School Ready to Learn

Decades of research have proven that educational success depends, in large part, on what happens to children before they ever start kindergarten. Waiting until kids are in high school to try to reduce Arizona’s alarmingly high rates of school dropout and teen pregnancy is simply too late (see KIDS COUNT update on page 5). In recognition of these facts, more and more Arizona leaders are coming together to focus on early care and education.

With the leadership of Superintendent of Public Instruction Jamie Molera, Arizona is part of a 16-state Ford Foundation initiative to improve school readiness and school success. Governor Hull, Representative Deb Gallett, education leaders, child advocates, and state agency officials are participating to identify, measure, and track the early threats that may prevent children from learning to read by the end of third grade. By measuring these early warning signals, schools and communities can take action to help young children before they fail. And policymakers can develop action plans to reduce these risk factors and increase success for children across Arizona.

Business leaders are also joining the effort to improve school readiness. After a year of examining the issues of child brain development, child care, and early learning, the Arizona School Readiness Task Force endorsed recommendations to increase access to affordable, quality child care and preschool. Bill Post, chair of the Task Force and President and CEO of Arizona Public Service, concludes that “infant care and preschool education should be near the top of everyone’s personal agenda and the highest priority for Arizona’s public policy leaders.”

The Task Force recommendations are published in a report called Growing Arizona and have been embraced by the larger business community. The new Arizona School Readiness Leadership Coalition will pursue these issues as part of a broad effort to strengthen Arizona’s economy and quality of life.

Online APS Payments Support CAA

You can help the Children’s Action Alliance open the doors of opportunity for Arizona’s children and families this summer when you pay your APS bill online at aps.com. APS is launching a charitable contribution campaign and will donate $1 to one of three Arizona charities every time a customer pays a bill online in July and August. When customers make online payments, they can select Children’s Action Alliance to receive $1 from APS.

Pay your APS electric bills online at aps.com this summer and every time, APS will invest $1 in CAA.
Publications Available from Children’s Action Alliance

NEW! Growing Arizona - A report by the Arizona School Readiness Task Force with recommendations to help more children in Arizona start school ready to learn.

NEW! Who’s for Kids and Who’s Just Kidding? - Brochure with key facts about kids and families. Includes questions to ask candidates running for office.

NEW! Kids COUNT 2002 - Ranks Arizona compared to other U.S. states on ten indicators of child well-being.

NEW! Beyond Kissing Babies: How to Transform Sound Bites Into Common Sense Solutions for Arizona’s Kids and Families - Briefing papers on major issues facing children in Arizona for candidates for public office.

NEW! Reliable Revenues for Responsible Budgets - Bulletin describing ten tax policies to help Arizona raise reliable revenues for responsible budgets.

NEW! The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Arizona - Describes the wages working parents in all 15 Arizona counties have to earn in order to meet their families’ basic needs.


For a complete list of publications available from Children’s Action Alliance, or to order a publication, please visit our website at www.azchildren.org, or call us at (602) 266-0707.

SAVE THE DATE!

Please mark your calendars and join us for Through the Eyes of a Child at the Scottsdale Center for the Arts on September 14 and the Gubernatorial Forum at the Herberger Theater on October 1.

For ticket information, please visit our website at www.azchildren.org, or call us at (602) 266-0707.

Jacque Steiner  
President

The Honorable Dan Schweiker

Nadine Mathis Basha  
Past President

Alice Snell

Brenda Sperduti

Jerry Ward

Carolyn Warner

Dave Wolfenden

Carol Kamin, Ph.D.  
Executive Director

Jaime P. Gutierrez

Nora Hannah

Andy Hurwitz

Derrick Johnson

Martin E. Latz

Steven W. Lynn

Elizabeth Hernandez McNamee

Bruce Merrill, Ph.D.

Jack Pfister

Steve Roman