



# Outlook: The Obama Administration

## *An Early Overview of Obama's Expected Policy Positions Affecting Children and Families*

---

By Helen Eisner and Varina Winder<sup>1</sup>  
Updated November 20, 2008

### **SUMMARY**

On January 20, Sen. Barack Obama will be inaugurated as our nation's 44<sup>th</sup> president. As the new administration is being assembled, this paper outlines what can be expected on issues of concern to member agencies of the Alliance for Children and Families and United Neighborhood Centers of America.

### **Political Context**

President-elect Obama enters the White House as the first Democrat to win more than 50 percent of the vote since 1976. The 2008 election also concludes a period of divided government as Democrats now hold the White House, at least 56 seats in the Senate, and 254 in the House.<sup>2</sup> With a Democratic Congress and a six percent margin of victory in the presidential election, there may be an expectation that the inauguration of President-elect Obama will trigger a flurry of legislative activity. However, the current economic crisis and consequent funding limitations will likely temper the new president's ability to accomplish all of the goals he originally set forth during the campaign. The country now faces a 6.5 percent unemployment rate and a \$10 trillion national debt. For the fiscal year that ended in September, the deficit reached \$455 billion and may rise to \$1 trillion in 2008.<sup>3</sup> Large-scale policy reforms will likely have to wait until President-elect Obama addresses economic recovery.

President-elect Obama has stated that his first priority in office will be to pass an economic stimulus package. Obama explained, "it is not going to be quick, and it is not going to be easy for us to dig ourselves out of the hole that we are in."<sup>4</sup> The president-elect explained further that if a stimulus is not passed in November, "it will be the first thing I get done as the president of the United States."<sup>5</sup> In addition to addressing economic recovery, President-elect Obama and the

---

<sup>1</sup> For more information, contact Helen Eisner, Policy Analyst, at (202) 429-0400 x21, [heisner@alliance1.org](mailto:heisner@alliance1.org) or [heisner@unca.org](mailto:heisner@unca.org) or Varina Winder, Policy Analyst, at (202) 439-0400 x16, [vwinder@alliance1.org](mailto:vwinder@alliance1.org) or [vwinder@unca.org](mailto:vwinder@unca.org).

<sup>2</sup> Paul Kane and Lori Montgomery, "Congressional Democrats Say Economy Will Be First Priority," *The Washington Post*, (November 9, 2008), <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/11/08/AR2008110802265.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Edward Epstein, "Obama Wants Stimulus to Be 'First Thing' in 111th Congress," *Congressional Quarterly* (November 7, 2008),

new 111<sup>th</sup> Congress will likely act quickly to pass an omnibus package that resolves outstanding FY 2009 appropriations. Since the FY 2009 appropriations were never completed, most government programs are currently being funded by a continuing resolution that expires in March. Early in his term, President-elect Obama will also have to outline his budget priorities for FY 2010. This initial budget will be a good opportunity to observe the new president's objectives for his administration, and how the economic situation has affected his ability to accomplish his campaign platform.

While budget and appropriations concerns are central to a discussion of what to expect from President-elect Obama, it is almost certain that the pressing issues of health care reform and No Child Left Behind reauthorization will be a part of Obama's presidential agenda. In fact, the president-elect has taken positions on many issues relevant to the memberships of the Alliance for Children and Families and United Neighborhood Centers of America. The following policy positions reflect President-elect Obama's platforms and statements as a candidate, and analyze the current political outlook for these issues. This summary is intended as an overview of President-elect Obama's policy interests.

## **PRESIDENT-ELECT OBAMA'S POLICY POSITIONS**

### **Tier One Policy Issues:**

#### **Budget/Appropriations**

##### *Annual Appropriations*

With Democrats controlling both the White House and Congress, the appropriations process under an Obama administration may be less vulnerable to the partisan conflicts that have stalled the process in recent years. President Bush's priorities were often at odds with those of House Appropriations Chairman David Obey (D-WI).<sup>6</sup> In the Bush administration's annual budget, there were frequently proposals to cut or flat fund social service programs.

During the campaign, President-elect Obama proposed a number of funding increases for education, health care, and other programs mentioned in this analysis. It remains to be seen what limitations the financial crisis will place on expanded funding. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) explained "I think it's important for the American people to know that many of our options have been diminished because of the downturn in the economy in the last couple of months."<sup>7</sup>

The majority of government programs, with the exception of Defense, Homeland Security, and Military Construction-Veterans' Affairs appropriations, are being funded only through March 6, 2009 by a continuing resolution. Since the appropriations process for FY 2009 never concluded, all outstanding funding bills will likely be wrapped into an omnibus package once the continuing resolution expires. Congressional leaders have begun work outlining the omnibus fiscal 2009

---

<http://www.cq.com/document/display.do?dockey=/cqonline/prod/data/docs/html/news/110/news110-000002984347.html@allnews&metapub=CQ-NEWS&searchIndex=0&seqNum=108> .

<sup>6</sup> CQ Staff, "Increased Majority Gives Democrats a Clearer Path to Enactment of Agenda," *Congressional Quarterly* (November 5, 2008),

<http://www.cq.com/document/display.do?dockey=/cqonline/prod/data/docs/html/news/110/news110-000002983453.html@allnews&metapub=CQ-NEWS&searchIndex=1&seqNum=16>.

<sup>7</sup> David Nather, "Obama's Next Task: Quick Rise to a Steep Challenge," *Congressional Quarterly* (November 10, 2008),

<http://www.cq.com/display.do?dockey=/cqonline/prod/data/docs/html/weeklyreport/110/weeklyreport110-000002984428.html@allnews&metapub=CQ-WEEKLYREPORT&searchIndex=0&seqNum=9> .

spending bill and plan to enact it quickly once President-elect Obama is inaugurated. Sen. Tom Harkin, Chairman of the Senate Labor-HHS-Education-Appropriations Subcommittee explained, "we hope to have all of our appropriations bills put together and be voted on early in January and sent to President Obama on his first day in office."<sup>8</sup> After taking office, President-elect Obama will also begin work on his FY 2010 budget requests.

### *Second Economic Stimulus Package*

During his first post-election press conference on November 7, President-elect Obama stated, "I want to see a stimulus sooner rather than later."<sup>9</sup> This "second" stimulus package follows a \$168 billion stimulus package, consisting largely of tax rebates, that was enacted in February 2008. With rising unemployment rates and states facing record deficits, Obama has expressed his desire that Congress do more to stimulate the economy.

In September, the House passed an economic stimulus package, however the package failed to receive the necessary votes in the Senate. Most congressional Republicans backed the Bush administration, which did not support the bill, and voted against the stimulus package. As the economy continues to worsen, congressional leadership has signaled that it wants to take further action by placing economic recovery back on the agenda.

Obama has expressed support for a stimulus package that includes funding for state aid (including the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP)), food stamps, infrastructure spending, and an extension of unemployment benefits. A second component of a large-scale stimulus may be tax cuts for middle-income Americans, which President-elect Obama spoke about on the campaign trail.

There are two strategies that congressional leadership is discussing. Under the first, Congress may return to a lame-duck session in November and pass a partial stimulus package that includes funding for programmatic elements such as state aid and food stamps. A second package addressing tax cuts could then be considered early in the new 111<sup>th</sup> Congress next year. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi explained, "Depending on what that first package is we may need another one."<sup>10</sup> If it is not possible to garner the votes or gain President Bush's support during a lame-duck session, the second strategy will be to assemble a large package after Obama enters the White House. Some economists are calling for a package as large as \$300 billion.<sup>11</sup>

### **Child Welfare**

President-elect Obama's statements about child welfare policy have been limited. However, Obama has signaled support for a few specific child welfare measures.

---

<sup>8</sup> David Clarke, "Spending Bill to Welcome Obama," *Congressional Quarterly* (November 18, 2008), <http://www.cq.com/document/display.do?docid=2987708&sourcetype=6>.

<sup>9</sup> Edward Epstein, "Obama Wants Stimulus to Be 'First Thing' in 111th Congress," *Congressional Quarterly* (November 7, 2008), <http://www.cq.com/document/display.do?dockey=/cqonline/prod/data/docs/html/news/110/news110-000002984347.html@allnews&metapub=CQ-NEWS&searchIndex=0&seqNum=108>.

<sup>10</sup> David Clarke and Edward Epstein, "Pelosi Says Push for Bigger Stimulus May Await Obama," *Congressional Quarterly* (November 5, 2008), <http://www.cq.com/document/display.do?dockey=/cqonline/prod/data/docs/html/news/110/news110-000002983466.html@allnews&metapub=CQ-NEWS&searchIndex=1&seqNum=30>.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

### *Child Welfare Reform*

While the recently passed Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008, now Public Law No: 110-351, contains some of the most significant reforms to the child welfare system in more than a decade, Congress may choose to enact a second round of reforms in the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress.

One of the areas that could be addressed is reform of the child welfare financing system. While President-elect Obama has not been specific about plans in this area, Sen. Baucus (D-MT), chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, has been outspoken about his commitment to child welfare finance reform, addressing it in a hearing this past fall.

The law enacted in October partially addresses this issue by gradually de-linking IV-E Adoption Assistance eligibility from outdated 1996 AFDC income standards, the so-called "lookback" provision. Because of anticipated high costs, however, IV-E Foster Care eligibility remains linked to AFDC, which no longer exists.

While Senate and House leadership staff have been reluctant to say how high a priority child welfare reform will be for the new administration, one well placed Senate staff person has said that the newly enacted law "bodes very well" for a complete de-linking of the child welfare system from AFDC standards." The staff person was "very encouraged" and said the new administration "is definitely friendly."

### *Child Abuse*

President-elect Obama is dedicated to preventing child abuse and supports proven methods that prevent abuse.<sup>12</sup> Obama offers no specific policy plans, however, as a senator he supported Dru's Law, which was included in the Adam Walsh Child Protection Act. Dru's Law created a national sex offender database. Obama also supports the KIDSA ACT, which mandates that all sex offenders submit their internet identities (e-mail addresses, etc.) to the National Sex Offender Public Registry.<sup>13</sup>

### *Foster Care*

Obama acknowledges the challenges facing foster children, including decreased likelihood of completing high school, maintaining consistent employment, and an increased chance of experiencing homelessness within two to four years of aging out of the foster care system. Obama plans to "invest in innovative new job training and workforce development programs that will provide those in foster care with the skills necessary to compete in the modern American workforce."<sup>14</sup>

### *Program Collaboration*

Barack Obama has proposed creating a Presidential Early Learning Council. The role of this council will be to better coordinate communication between federal and state programs that benefit children. The Council would also help organize the use of federal, state, and local funds for areas such as child welfare, child abuse prevention, education, and child care. To carry out this plan, the Council will draw on the expertise of state

---

<sup>12</sup> Obama for America, "Barack Obama: A Champion for Children," <http://www.barackobama.com/pdf/issues/FactSheetChildAdvocacy.pdf> .

<sup>13</sup> Obama for America, "Barack Obama: A Champion for Children," <http://www.barackobama.com/pdf/issues/FactSheetChildAdvocacy.pdf> .

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

officials, community and religious leaders, business leaders, and researchers. Obama worked to set up a similar program in Illinois when he was in the state Senate.<sup>15</sup>

#### *Additional Background*

The Child Welfare League of America has invited Obama to convene a White House Conference on Children and Youth in 2010. A similar conference on children and youth issues has not been held since 1970. As a senator from Illinois, Obama was one of 69 members of Congress who co-sponsored a bill calling for a Conference on Children and Youth.<sup>16</sup>

### **Health Care**

Health reform is likely to be a priority agenda item when Obama takes office in January. Reforming the American health care system has been a long awaited policy change and the subject of significant debate during the presidential campaign. Obama wants to enact full coverage for children and move towards universal health care for all adults.<sup>17</sup>

When Democrats attempted to reform the health care system during the Clinton administration, they did not succeed. The Obama administration is expected to conduct a more transparent process. Senator Kennedy, Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee has signaled that he will try to promote Obama's campaign plan and congressional leadership has signaled that they expect many upcoming hearings to address Obama's reform proposal.<sup>18</sup>

#### *Enacting Universal Health Care*

Barack Obama hopes to sign universal health care legislation by the end of his first term in office. The Obama health care plan is expected to cost between \$50 and \$65 billion and would create a National Health Insurance Exchange.<sup>19</sup> This exchange would offer a diverse selection of private and public insurance options to give individuals and small businesses the opportunity to purchase affordable health care. Under Obama's health care plan, individuals who like their current health care coverage are able to keep the plan that they have. However, a person who does not qualify for SCHIP or Medicaid, and cannot afford insurance, will receive premium subsidies on a sliding scale based on income to purchase a plan through the exchange.<sup>20</sup>

President-elect Obama's plan offers tax credits to families to allow them to purchase insurance plans and to reduce their medical expenses. Additionally, Obama would enact a small business tax credit to help these businesses purchase insurance for their employees. The president-elect also would require that insurers cover eligible applicants

---

<sup>15</sup> Sybil Maimin, "Barack Obama on Education," *Education Update Online*, (February 2008), <http://www.educationupdate.com/archives/2008/FEB/html/cov-barack.html>.

<sup>16</sup> Child Welfare League of America, "CWLA Congratulates President Elect Barack Obama and Vice President Elect Joe Biden," <http://www.cwla.org/advocacy/preselect08cw.htm>.

<sup>17</sup> Barack Obama Campaign Website, "Healthcare," <http://www.barackobama.com/issues/healthcare/>.

<sup>18</sup> Paul Kane and Lori Montgomery, "Congressional Democrats Say Economy Will Be First Priority," *The Washington Post*, (November 9, 2008), <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/11/08/AR2008110802265.html>.

<sup>19</sup> Marilyn Werber Serafini, "What's at Stake: Health Care Coverage," *National Journal*, (November 4, 2008): 43.

<sup>20</sup> Rahul Rajkumar, David Blumenthal, and David Cutler, "The Obama Prescription," *Campaigns and Elections* (October 2008): 13.

regardless of any pre-existing conditions that they might have and that young adults be allowed to stay on their parents plan until age 25.<sup>21</sup> Obama also wants to require employers that do not offer health care coverage for their employees to make contributions that fund the plan.<sup>22</sup>

A large component of Obama's health plan is expanding access to Medicaid and SCHIP. As president, Obama intends to require all children to have health insurance. To fund these expansions and reforms, Obama would allow the Bush tax cuts to expire for individuals with an annual income of more than \$250,000.<sup>23</sup>

Although health care is expected to be one of the first agenda items for President-elect Obama, economic recovery has become the top priority. House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-MD) explained, "obviously, we're not going to do health care in the first month or two."<sup>24</sup> While action may be postponed, members of Congress are preparing themselves for the reform debate. Senator Kennedy has begun work to prepare the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee for hearings so that Congress can move on health reform in 2009.

### *SCHIP*

The reauthorization of the State Children's Health Insurance Plan (SCHIP) may be one of the first things to occur once President-elect Obama takes office. After the 2007 reauthorization attempt failed, Obama stated, "four million American children were denied basic health coverage today because Washington politicians failed to stand up to this president's disgraceful veto."<sup>25</sup> House Ways and Means Health Subcommittee Chairman Fortney (Pete) Stark (D-CA) recently signaled that in 2009 SCHIP will look very similar to the version that President Bush vetoed last year.<sup>26</sup> The version is expected to retain language creating mental health parity in the program.

One reason SCHIP may move quickly in the next Congress is the selection of Rep. Rahm Emanuel (D-IL) as Obama's chief of staff. Emanuel was a strong supporter of SCHIP in the House and has already begun talks with Majority Leader Hoyer about the agenda for next term.<sup>27</sup>

### *Behavioral Health*

On a National Alliance on Mental Illness survey, President-elect Obama expressed strong support for mental health parity and other measures to improve the quality of behavioral health care. Both President-elect Obama and Vice-President-elect Biden have been strong supporters of mental health parity and providing equal coverage for

---

<sup>21</sup> Barack Obama Campaign Website, "Healthcare," <http://www.barackobama.com/issues/healthcare/>.

<sup>22</sup> Rahul Rajkumar, David Blumenthal, and David Cutler, "The Obama Prescription," *Campaigns and Elections* (October 2008): 13.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Paul Kane and Lori Montgomery, "Congressional Democrats Say Economy Will Be First Priority," *The Washington Post*, (November 9, 2008), <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/11/08/AR2008110802265.html>.

<sup>25</sup> Barack Obama Campaign Website, "Obama on SCHIP," <http://my.barackobama.com/page/community/post/samgrahamfelsen/CnFD>.

<sup>26</sup> John Reichard, "Stark Sees Passing Vetoed SCHIP Measure as First Priority," (November 10, 2008), <http://www.cqpolitics.com/wmspage.cfm?docID=hbnews-000002984877>.

<sup>27</sup> Paul Kane and Lori Montgomery, "Congressional Democrats Say Economy Will Be First Priority," *The Washington Post*, (November 9, 2008), <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/11/08/AR2008110802265.html>.

mental health and substance abuse conditions.<sup>28</sup> Obama also would protect coverage of medications used to treat behavioral disorders and increase research on mental illness. Additionally, Obama supports the Keeping Families Together Act, a bill to make sure families are not forced to relinquish custody to help their children obtain mental health services.<sup>29</sup>

### *Seniors*

During his presidential campaign, Obama proposed improving the quality and efficiency of the Medicare program. Obama also plans to provide cheaper prescription drugs for seniors by negotiating with Medicare companies and allowing seniors to import drugs from abroad.<sup>30</sup>

## **Tier Two and Tier Three Issues:**

### **Block Grants**

President-elect Obama supports fully funding the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and making sure that Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) funding remains adequate. The CDBG program provides funds to create economically viable neighborhoods by funding activities such as housing revitalization and public services.<sup>31</sup> The CCDBG program helps subsidize child care for low-income families. In recent years, both programs have experienced funding cuts or flat funding that fails to account for rising costs due to inflation.<sup>32</sup> Any increased investments would represent a significant change for both programs.

### **Disability Issues**

Barack Obama put forward a comprehensive plan to address the needs of Americans with disabilities. This plan includes fully funding the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, approving a universal health care plan that guarantees that Americans with disabilities can access coverage, restrictions against denying individuals insurance based on pre-existing conditions, and increasing funding for agencies that enforce anti-discrimination laws.<sup>33</sup>

### **Education**

The passage of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2002 was a central piece of President Bush's domestic policy agenda. Since its enactment, No Child Left Behind has been the subject of widespread controversy. An attempt to reauthorize the law during the summer of 2007 failed because of disagreement over accountability provisions and union opposition to merit-based

---

<sup>28</sup> National Alliance on Mental Illness, "Brining Mental Healthcare to the Ballot," (2008), [http://www.nami.org/Content/ContentGroups/Policy/2008\\_Primarys\\_and\\_Elections/Questionnaire\\_NAMI122807.pdf](http://www.nami.org/Content/ContentGroups/Policy/2008_Primarys_and_Elections/Questionnaire_NAMI122807.pdf) .

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Barack Obama Campaign Website, "Healthcare," <http://www.barackobama.com/issues/healthcare/>.

<sup>31</sup> Barack Obama Campaign Website, "Urban Policy," [http://origin.barackobama.com/issues/urban\\_policy/](http://origin.barackobama.com/issues/urban_policy/) .

<sup>32</sup> Barack Obama Campaign Website, "Barack Obama and Joe Biden's Plan for Lifetime Success Through Education," <http://www.barackobama.com/pdf/issues/PreK-12EducationFactSheet.pdf> .

<sup>33</sup> Barack Obama Campaign Website, "Disabilities," <http://origin.barackobama.com/issues/disabilities/> .

teacher pay. With reauthorization of the law still pending, education reform will almost certainly be addressed by the new administration. However, the timing of No Child Left Behind reauthorization remains unclear. The 111<sup>th</sup> Congress is poised to address universal health care and the economic crisis before education reform. President-elect Obama has also made supporting early childhood education and after-school programs an important component of his candidacy.

#### *No Child Left Behind / Education Funding*

Concerning the No Child Left Behind Act, President-elect Obama has said that “the goal of the law was the right one, but unfulfilled funding promises, inadequate implementation by the Education Department and shortcomings in the design of the law itself have limited its effectiveness and undercut its support. As a result, the law has failed to provide high-quality teachers in every classroom and failed to adequately support and pay those teachers.”<sup>34</sup>

The president-elect makes clear that he intends to fully fund No Child Left Behind and support reforms that improve teacher quality. Obama has called for an \$18 billion increase in federal education spending. Obama also believes that, “teachers should not be forced to spend the academic year preparing students to fill in bubbles on standardized tests.”<sup>35</sup> Yet, Obama has voiced support for “high standards, accountability, and a focus on assessments done right.”<sup>36</sup> Thus, an Obama administration is unlikely to eliminate the law, but rather advance reforms that improve it.

Obama’s positions show that he wants to take a more nuanced approach to student progress and reverse punitive measures for schools that struggle to meet No Child Left Behind benchmarks. Instead, he wants to provide schools that fail to meet adequate yearly progress with additional support.<sup>37</sup> Apart from these broad statements, it is unclear what specific measures President-elect Obama would like to implement. In Washington, many organizations are focused on growth models as an alternate form of evaluating progress. Growth models determine success based on whether the students in a school have improved from one year to the next instead of whether students reach a specific level of proficiency in a given year. Many education advocates are also interested in incorporating multiple measures to determine adequate yearly progress. Obama has not indicated his support for either method.

#### *Teacher Quality*

During the Democratic National Convention in Denver, President-elect Obama called for “an army of new teachers.”<sup>38</sup> Obama has been especially focused on recruiting, training, and retaining new teachers. This includes offering scholarships for teachers who choose to teach in high-need areas, providing mentoring for teachers, and implementing

---

<sup>34</sup> Barack Obama Campaign Website, “Education,” <http://www.barackobama.com/issues/education/>.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Maria Glod, “In Rush to White House, ‘No Child’ Is Left Behind,” <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/09/14/AR2008091402461.html?tid=informbox> .

<sup>37</sup> Barack Obama Campaign Website, “Education,” <http://www.barackobama.com/issues/education/>.

<sup>38</sup> Los Angeles Times, “Excerpts: Comparing Obama, McCain on the issues,” (October 16, 2008), [http://www.latimes.com/news/politics/la-na-excerpts16-2008oct16\\_0,7690828.story](http://www.latimes.com/news/politics/la-na-excerpts16-2008oct16_0,7690828.story) .

increased professional development. Obama supports tying teacher pay to performance subject to teachers' union involvement and approval.<sup>39</sup>

#### *After-School Programs*

Obama has called for increasing funding for after-school programs, specifically doubling funding for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center program. Through this program, the federal government offers grants to support school- and community-based after-school programs. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center program serves more than one million school-aged children. Barack Obama's proposal would expand the program to an additional one million low-income children.<sup>40</sup>

As a senator, President-elect Obama helped enact legislation that creates expanded summer learning opportunities for low-income youth. In Congress, Obama co-sponsored the Summer Term Education Programs for Upward Progress (STEP UP) Act, which awards grants to promote partnerships between schools and community-based organizations to carry out activities during the summer months. The STEP UP program aims to close the gap between the enrichment that wealthier youth and low-income youth receive when school is out of session.<sup>41</sup>

#### *Charter Schools/School Choice*

Obama has stated that he intends to double funding for the Federal Charter School Program. Additional funding will be given to states that improve charter school accountability and make an effort to reform or close failing charter schools.

At an American Federation of Teachers conference, Obama criticized the act of spending government money to help low-income students attend private schools through voucher programs. However, the president-elect has said that he would, "not allow [his] predispositions to stand in the way of making sure that our kids can learn...you do what works for the kids."<sup>42</sup>

#### *English Language Learners*

Obama supports holding schools accountable for the progress of Limited English Proficient students under No Child Left Behind to ensure that these students have the resources to complete school.<sup>43</sup>

#### *Universal Pre-School*

Obama wants to promote a movement towards universal pre-school by providing \$10 billion each year for state Zero to Five efforts. Zero to Five programs facilitate early-childhood education to prepare children for kindergarten. The plan is unique because, in addition to typical pre-school aged instruction, the program also emphasizes early care and education for infants.<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup> Barack Obama Campaign Website, "Education,"

<http://www.barackobama.com/issues/education/>.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Barack Obama Campaign Website, "Barack Obama and Joe Biden's Plan for Lifetime Success Through Education," <http://www.barackobama.com/pdf/issues/PreK-12EducationFactSheet.pdf> .

<sup>42</sup> Lisa Caruso, "What's at Stake: Education," *National Journal*, (November 4, 2008): 38.

<sup>43</sup> Barack Obama Campaign Website, "Education,"

<http://www.barackobama.com/issues/education/>.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

### *Head Start / Early Head Start*

Obama plans to quadruple funding for Early Head Start, and improve the quality of both Head Start and Early Head Start programs.<sup>45</sup>

### *Additional Learning Time*

The president-elect proposed providing \$200 million in grants to help states and districts offer additional learning time for at-risk students in need of extra support.<sup>46</sup>

## **Housing**

Obama has proposed creating a National Affordable Housing Trust Fund to spur development in mixed-income areas. Obama has also stated that if the Housing Trust Fund fails, he is open to restoring cuts that have been made to federal public housing subsidies.<sup>47</sup>

To address the mortgage crisis, Obama plans to create a 10 percent universal mortgage credit which would aid millions of homeowners. Obama also wants to educate the public about mortgages and loans, and create stronger penalties for mortgage fraud. Additionally, Obama proposes allowing bankruptcy courts to adjust mortgage payment amounts instead of protecting the subprime mortgage industry.

## **Immigration**

During the campaign, Obama signaled support for increasing the number of legal immigrants, punishing employers who hire undocumented workers, and helping undocumented immigrants pay a fine, learn English, and enter the citizenship process.<sup>48</sup>

Obama has not presented a detailed plan for immigration reform. However, an overhaul of the nation's immigration policies may be forthcoming. Frank Sharry, the executive director America's Voice, a pro-immigrant group, gave Obama 60 percent chance of successfully passing immigration reform in his first term. Obama will have to overcome significant political obstacles before reform can occur. Ira Mehlman, the spokesman for the Federation for American Immigration Reform which was instrumental in defeating the 2007 reform attempt explained, "the same political coalition that blocked George Bush [is] still going to be there next year."<sup>49</sup> This may make it difficult for President-elect Obama to gain consensus for immigration reform.

## **Non-Profit Reform**

President-elect Obama will create an agency at the Corporation for National and Community Service that will focus exclusively on developing the capacity and effectiveness of the non-profit sector.<sup>50</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Barack Obama Campaign Website, "Barack Obama and Joe Biden's Plan for Lifetime Success Through Education," <http://www.barackobama.com/pdf/issues/PreK-12EducationFactSheet.pdf> .

<sup>47</sup> Kelly Petty, "What's at Stake: Urban Affairs," *National Journal*, (November 4, 2008): 36.

<sup>48</sup> Barack Obama Campaign Website, "Immigration," Barack Obama Campaign Website, "Healthcare," <http://www.barackobama.com/issues/healthcare/>.

<sup>49</sup> Lisa Caruso, "What's at Stake: Immigration," *National Journal*, (November 4, 2008): 39.

<sup>50</sup> Barack Obama Campaign Website, "Service," <http://origin.barackobama.com/issues/service/>.

## Poverty

### *Welfare*

The president-elect is supportive of the welfare-to-work policies included in the 1996 welfare reform law.<sup>51</sup> According to Kelly Petty of the *National Journal*, Obama believes in “active citizen involvement and [policies that] go beyond just throwing more money at the problem through government spending.”<sup>52</sup> Instead, Obama supports proven methods of reviving urban areas and preventing violence.

### *Urban Policy*

The Obama administration will create an office of urban policy with a “poverty czar” that reports directly to the president. The goal of the new office is to make sure the funding for urban programs is allocated to the most vulnerable, high-need areas. With this new office to oversee programs, President-elect Obama will fund an additional \$1 billion in ex-offender programs.<sup>53</sup>

One policy that Obama proposed during the campaign to improve urban communities is the creation “Promise Neighborhoods” in cities across the country. These neighborhoods would be modeled after the Harlem Children’s Zone and offer services to build strong communities. “Promise Neighborhoods” would receive government funding to support community centers, charter schools, and other prevention services.

During the campaign, Obama discussed funding activities modeled after the successful CeaseFire program in Chicago. CeaseFire utilizes a community-based approach to stop youth violence through street-level initiatives and education.<sup>54</sup>

### *Minimum Wage*

Obama plans to raise the minimum wage to \$9.50 an hour by 2011 and index it to inflation.<sup>55</sup>

### *Savings Incentives*

To encourage working Americans to save, Obama supports establishing a savings match for families that earn less than \$75,000. For these families, Obama has proposed that the federal government match 50 percent of their first \$1,000 in savings.<sup>56</sup>

### *Hunger and Nutrition*

As a child, President-elect Obama’s mother briefly relied on food stamps to feed her family. Obama hopes to end childhood hunger by 2015 and supports programs such as Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), the Summer Food Service Program, and the Food Stamp program. During the campaign, President-elect Obama noted that currently only two-thirds of eligible recipients receive food stamps, and proposed finding ways to improve the reach and efficiency of the food stamp program.<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>51</sup> Kelly Petty, “What’s at Stake: Urban Affairs,” *National Journal*, (November 4, 2008): 37.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Kelly Petty, “What’s at Stake: Urban Affairs,” *National Journal*, (November 4, 2008): 37.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Barack Obama Website, “Poverty,” <http://www.barackobama.com/issues/poverty/>.

<sup>56</sup> Barack Obama Website, “Obama and Biden: Tackling Domestic Hunger,” [http://obama.3cdn.net/c4b14802fd5e66ee67\\_xum6bn6nu.pdf](http://obama.3cdn.net/c4b14802fd5e66ee67_xum6bn6nu.pdf).

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

Obama has stated that he recognizes and supports the role that community-based organizations play in food distribution. Obama also noted that the rising cost of food is placing additional stress on working families. The president-elect explained, "we've got rising food prices here in the United States. My top priority is making sure that people are able to get enough to eat."<sup>58</sup> Obama is also supportive of supplemental funding for food and nutrition in an economic stimulus package.

The president-elect has proposed expanding the FreshFruit and Vegetable Program to help provide high-need elementary school students with nutritious meals. Obama will also work to enroll additional low-income students in the school meals program.<sup>59</sup>

## **Taxes**

### *Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)*

During the campaign, Obama proposed expanding EITC to help low-income families. This would be accomplished by increasing the number of working parents eligible for EITC, increasing the benefits for families with three or more children, reducing the EITC marriage penalty, and increasing benefits for parents who pay child support.<sup>60</sup>

### *Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit*

Obama wants to make the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit refundable and to allow high-need families to receive up to a 50 percent credit for child care costs.<sup>61</sup>

## **Teen Pregnancy**

President-elect Obama supports comprehensive education to prevent the incidence of teen pregnancy. In his own words, Obama explained, "I believe we must work together to reduce the number of unintended pregnancies. I support legislation to expand access to contraception, health information, and preventative services to help reduce unintended pregnancies."<sup>62</sup>

In 2006, Senator Obama voted for an amendment that provides \$100 million for the prevention of unintended pregnancies. As a senator, Obama co-sponsored the Prevention First Act of 2007 to support family planning and sex education.<sup>63</sup>

## **Workforce Investment**

During the campaign, Barack Obama proposed investing \$1 billion in transitional jobs and career pathways programs to help provide opportunities for the low-income workforce.<sup>64</sup> Obama also proposed new investments in environmentally conscious industries and renewable energy. His

---

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Barack Obama Campaign Website, "Obama and Biden: Tackling Domestic Hunger," [http://obama.3cdn.net/c4b14802fd5e66ee67\\_xum6bn6nu.pdf](http://obama.3cdn.net/c4b14802fd5e66ee67_xum6bn6nu.pdf).

<sup>60</sup> Barack Obama Campaign Website, "Economy," <http://www.barackobama.com/issues/economy/>.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> NARAL Pro-Choice America, "Sen. Barack Obama's Record on Choice," <http://www.prochoiceamerica.org/elections/statements/obama.html>.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Barack Obama Campaign Website, "Urban Policy," [http://origin.barackobama.com/issues/urban\\_policy/](http://origin.barackobama.com/issues/urban_policy/).

campaign position stated that Obama would invest in new green technologies and industries that would create five million new green jobs for the American economy.<sup>65</sup>

#### *Disadvantaged and Disconnected Youth*

President-elect Obama plans to invest in proven methods of supporting disconnected youth, creating youth employment opportunities, and helping students stay in school and graduate. Obama plans to implement an energy-focused jobs program that offers youth experience in improving the energy efficiency of their communities while pursuing their GED. Barack Obama also supports expanding the YouthBuild Program to offer low-income youth exposure to housing construction projects while finishing high school.<sup>66</sup> Additionally, Obama would like to provide grants to private/public partnerships that implement effective methods of confronting the dropout crisis and improving graduation rates.<sup>67</sup>

— o —

#### **About the Alliance for Children and Families and United Neighborhood Centers of America**

The Alliance for Children and Families, a nonprofit association, was formed by the 1998 merger of Family Service America and the National Association of Homes and Services for Children. The Alliance represents over 370 nonprofit organizations across the nation that provide services and economic empowerment to children and families. Alliance agencies cover a wide spectrum of providers, including a diversity of faith-based organizations and nonsectarian agencies. Together, these organizations deliver more than \$2 billion annually in services to more than 8 million people in nearly 6,700 communities across the United States. More information about the Alliance is available at [www.alliance1.org](http://www.alliance1.org).

United Neighborhood Centers of America (UNCA) is a voluntary, nonprofit, national organization with neighborhood-based member agencies throughout the United States. Formerly known as the National Federation of Settlements and Neighborhood Centers, it was founded in 1911 by Jane Addams and other pioneers of the settlement movement. More information about UNCA is available at [www.unca.org](http://www.unca.org).

For more information, contact the Washington office of the Alliance and UNCA at:

Alliance for Children and Families  
United Neighborhood Centers of America  
1001 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 601  
Washington, DC 20036  
(202) 429-0400  
[policy@alliance1.org](mailto:policy@alliance1.org)

---

<sup>65</sup> Barack Obama Campaign Website, "Economy," <http://www.barackobama.com/issues/economy/>.

<sup>66</sup> Barack Obama Campaign Website, "Service," <http://origin.barackobama.com/issues/service/>.

<sup>67</sup> Barack Obama Campaign Website, "Barack Obama and Joe Biden's Plan for Lifetime Success Through Education," <http://www.barackobama.com/pdf/issues/PreK-12EducationFactSheet.pdf>.