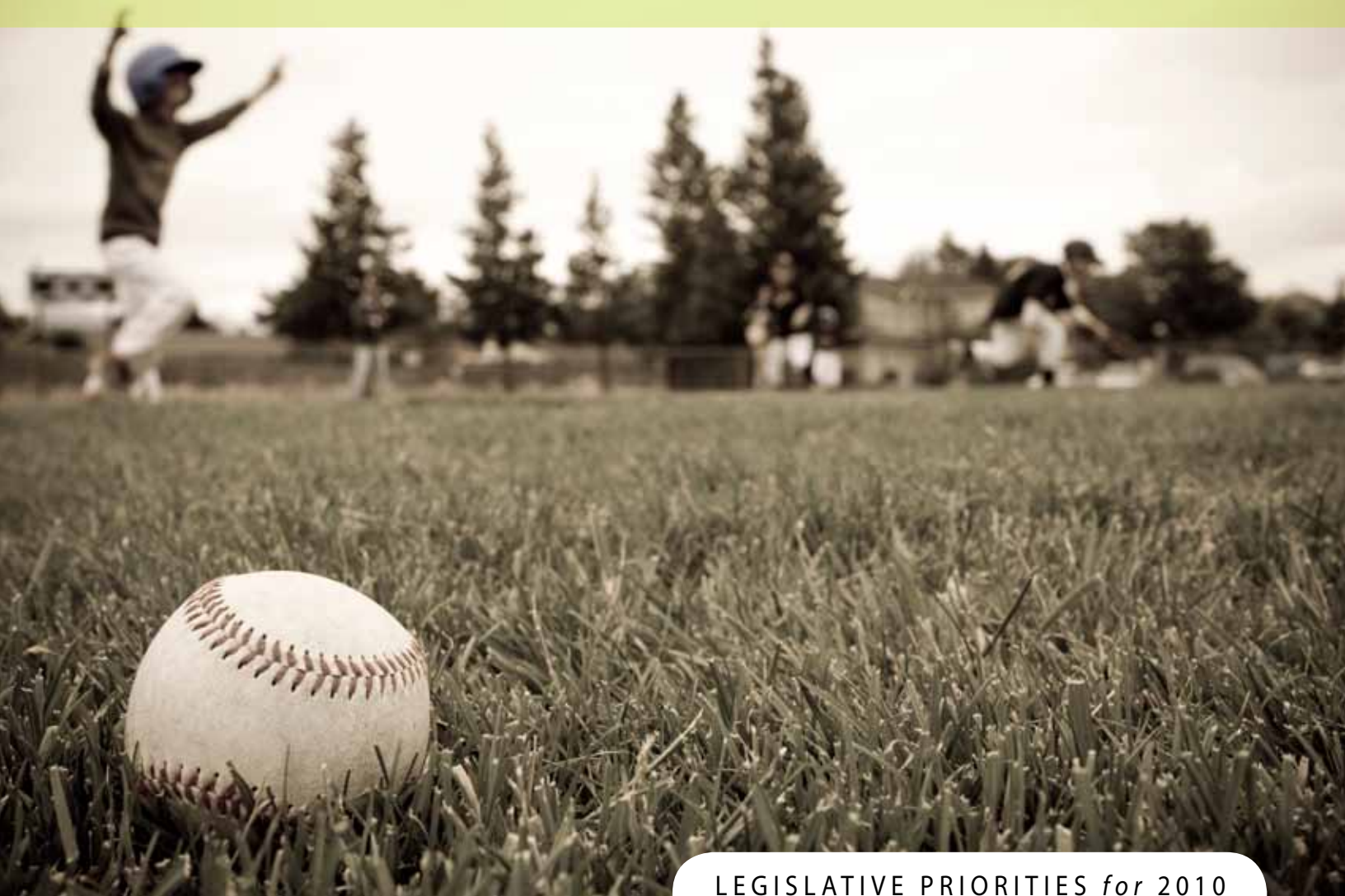


STEPPING UP TO THE PLATE *for* KANSAS KIDS



LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES *for* 2010



Will we step up to the plate for kids?

For millions of American children, the Great Depression was more than an economic crisis. Their schools were closed, medical and dental care was hard to come by, and their parents were struggling to make ends meet.

But, as Americans, we stepped up to the plate. We implemented innovative solutions that not only strengthened



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our schools, our health care system and our workforce, but also provided generations of young Americans with the opportunities they needed to rise above one of the worst economic times our nation has endured.

Some 75 years later, our nation is being tested again. The economic stability of families in Kansas and across the country is slipping. In fact, according to the latest Kansas KIDS COUNT data:

- **We've hit a decade high in terms of**

uninsured children. The rate of uninsured Kansas kids has climbed from 51,000 to nearly 72,000 children in just three years.

- **Childhood poverty continues to increase in Kansas.** About 40 percent of Kansas kids are living in low-income or poverty-stricken households.

- **More Kansas children qualify for the free lunches at school.** Roughly 42 percent of school-age children in Kansas are participating in the federal free and reduced lunch program.

So will we, as Kansans, step up to the plate this time around?

One of the best ways to bring ourselves out of this recession is to invest in our future. Now is the time to make sure that Kansas children have the resources they need to grow up healthy, educated and ready to serve as our next workforce, our next taxpayers and our next community leaders.

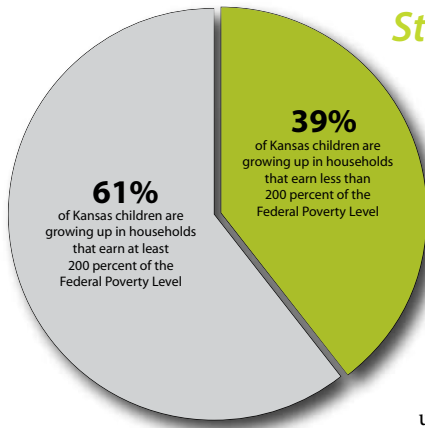
For decades, Kansas lawmakers have made innovative and successful investments in the well-being of Kansas children. Now is not the time to change course. Generations

before us realized that the nation's children — regardless of difficult economic times — required a good education, a clean bill of health, and basic necessities such as food and shelter in order to lead our country into a better tomorrow. The same holds true today.

We need to maintain the progress Kansas has made on children's issues. This includes protecting funds that have long been designated to early learning programs, keeping our commitment to provide Kansas kids with the health care they need at a price their parents can afford, and promoting initiatives that encourage college or job training so that our next generation can achieve financial independence and bring new skills to our state's work force.

Investing in children right now is critical to helping Kansas families weather this economic storm, and it's critical to strengthening our future economy.

This article by Gary Brunk was reprinted from The Wichita Eagle. Brunk is president and CEO of Kansas Action for Children.



Right now, about 40 percent — more than 275,000 Kansas children — are growing up in low-income or poverty-stricken households.

Stepping up for our future. In challenging economic times, our state leaders are faced with many difficult decisions. One of the most pressing decisions is how to balance the state's short-term budget crisis without jeopardizing our state's ability to prosper in the long-term. Kansas children are a critical part of the long-term solution. What we do in the short-term — regarding children's health, early education and economic stability — will determine whether or not the next generation of Kansans will be equipped to lead us in better economic times. Now is the time to make sure that Kansas children have the resources they need to grow up healthy, educated and ready to serve as our next workforce, our next taxpayers and our next community leaders. Stepping up for our future means stepping up for Kansas kids.

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES for 2010

Protecting what matters most.

For more than a decade, HealthWave has been an effective and fiscally responsible way to protect the health of our next generation. And, last year, lawmakers provided the leadership to leverage new federal dollars that will provide more Kansas children with the health care they need at a price their parents can afford. By maintaining our investment in HealthWave, we can protect what matters most — both now and for the long haul. In the short-term, Kansas kids can find the preventive care they need to stay healthy and see a doctor when they get sick. In the long-term, we can reduce some of the burden of uncompensated care and costly emergency room visits that are impacting community hospitals and clinics throughout the state.

Keeping Kansans in the workforce.

As our state continues to weather a tough economy, it's critical that we keep Kansans in the workforce and earning a paycheck. But, one of the biggest hurdles for working families is finding child care they can trust. Families in most other states rely on a child care system that has adequate checks and balances. But, that's not the case for many Kansas families. In fact, our state ranks 47th in the nation when it comes to child care oversight in part because one in three child care facilities in Kansas are never inspected. One of the best ways we can bring our child care system up to par with neighboring states — and, in turn, make it easier for Kansans to remain in the workforce — is to start inspecting all child care facilities.

Making informed decisions.

Kansas lacks the data that policymakers need to make informed decisions about the infant mortality problem facing our state. By collecting comprehensive data on infant deaths, neighboring states like Iowa, Nebraska and Colorado have been able to leverage federal dollars and implement solutions that have significantly reduced their infant mortality rates. Kansas should take the first step by collecting the necessary data that will allow policymakers to determine what factors are contributing to the state's high infant mortality rate. This can be achieved by providing statutory authority to the Kansas Department of Health & Environment to collect and analyze information about infant deaths in Kansas.

Keeping the promise.

Nearly a decade ago, Kansas legislators made a commitment to our state's future prosperity by establishing the Children's Initiatives Fund (CIF). We dedicated those CIF dollars to quality early learning programs — programs like Early Head Start, Pre-K and Parents as Teachers — that are making a difference every day in the lives of our youngest citizens and in the livelihood of our state. We know that when children have access to quality early learning programs, they are more likely to succeed in the classroom and in the workforce. By keeping our commitment to early education and maintaining the state's investment in the CIF, we can ensure that today's children will be equipped to lead Kansas toward a more prosperous future.

Stabilizing the financial health of Kansans.

The financial health of our state relies not only the ability of policymakers to effectively manage the state's budget, but also on the ability of Kansans to effectively manage their personal finances. Though Kansas schools work to incorporate financial literacy into their curriculum, teachers report that more training is needed for them to effectively teach personal financial literacy. By placing a \$1 surcharge on car title and payday loans made in Kansas, we can fund professional development for Kansas teachers to obtain the training they need to effectively educate school-age children on consumer finance issues. With comprehensive training for teachers, future generations of Kansans will have the skills they need to make wise financial decisions.

Increasing accountability to Kansas taxpayers.

The democratic process works best when citizens have transparent access to information about how their tax dollars are being spent. Right now, the KanView Web site, which was created to provide that transparency to Kansas taxpayers, only shows half of the state spending picture. The state's Tax Expenditure Report details indirect spending made by the state through tax exemptions and credits. By making this report available through KanView, we can increase transparency to Kansas taxpayers and ultimately enhance accountability in our state spending.

Kansas Action for Children is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the lives of Kansas children and families. For more than 30 years, KAC has worked alongside policymakers and community leaders throughout the state to develop and implement cost-effective, data-driven solutions to some of our state's most pressing children's issues.



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