

# CONGRESSIONAL UPDATE

## Senate Child Support Bill Introduced: Child Support Protection Act of 2009

Dear Fellow Child Support Professionals,

Yesterday a bipartisan group of Senators introduced the Child Support Protection Act of 2009, restoring the use of performance incentives as a match for drawing down Federal funds (please see below statements). NCSEA and our strategic partners sincerely appreciate the introduction of this legislation and strongly support the permanent restoration of this important funding source for state child support agencies. NCSEA will keep you updated on developments regarding this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Howard G. Baldwin, Jr.  
President

National Child Support Enforcement Association

By Mr. ROCKEFELLER (for himself, Mr. Cornyn, Mr. Kohl, and Ms. Snowe):

S. 1859. A bill to reinstate Federal matching of State spending of child support incentive payments; to the Committee on Finance.

Mr. ROCKEFELLER.

Mr. President, today, I introduce the Child Support Protection Act of 2009; with my colleagues Senators Cornyn, Kohl, and Snowe. This bill continues the long-standing, bipartisan support of Congress for the Child Support Enforcement program, which began with the passage of the authorizing legislation in 1974.

Child support enforcement is a strong partnership between the Federal Government and State governments to help parents provide long term support for their children. It includes a network of 60,000 dedicated staff serving 17 million children across this country.

In 2008, paternity was established for 1.8 million children ensuring that the legal rights of both the children and their fathers were protected; 1.2 million orders for support were also established, resulting in \$26.6 billion of child support being collected and distributed to families. This is an important investment in the future

of our Nation, our children.

So, the Child Support Enforcement program's results are impressive and it is widely recognized as one of the most effective programs operated by the Federal Government. In fact, the program is notable for collecting \$4.79 for each dollar of expenditure. It is a true bargain that works well.

Child support collections account for 31 percent of the income of single parent households, but the program does so much more. It works with non-custodial parents who need employment so that they can make regular payments. Child support staff also play a critical role in times of high joblessness, by processing adjustments to support orders so that non-custodial parents do not fall hopelessly behind.

When Congress passed the Child Support Performance and Incentive Act of 1998, CSPIA, it created an innovative incentive program that rewards efficient, results-oriented child support enforcement efforts. These earned performance incentives must be used for child support activities. One of every \$4 from State expenditures to fund the child support program comes from CSPIA incentives and matched Federal funds. The Deficit Reduction Act, DRA, of 2005 repealed the authority to use the earned performance incentives as a match for Federal funds. The bill we have introduced today reverses the funding reduction imposed by the DRA.

States are using the incentives in a variety of ways. In my State of West Virginia, the incentive dollars are being used to invest in technology to upgrade services and enhance customer service. Thirty States or territories are investing in staff and program operations. Sixteen States are investing in technology, and three others are investing in customer service programs.

The Child Support Protection Act would give States the authority to use earned performance incentives to fund this important work and continue the impressive results that are being achieved. This permanent reversal is critical so that those in State and local government can budget for 2011 and beyond. I urge my colleagues in the Senate to cosponsor this much needed legislation that is not only important to child support enforcement, but our children, their families, and the States.

Mr. KOHL.

Mr. President, I rise with my colleagues, Senators Rockefeller, Cornyn and Snowe, in support of the Child Support Protection Act. Our bipartisan group has joined together in a fight for our states, counties and the people we serve every day. The legislation we are introducing today represents a renewed effort in that fight, as we work to restore cuts to the child support enforcement program.

This fight began in 2005 during Senate debate of the Deficit Reduction Act, or the DRA. That bill included cuts to the child support enforcement program--one of the most effective federal programs and one that directly benefits hardworking, single parent families. During consideration of the DRA, I joined 75 other Senators in support of a resolution rejecting child support funding cuts. But conferees ignored the Senate's record, including a provision to prevent states from receiving Federal matching funds on incentive payments.

Before passage of the Deficit Reduction Act, states with high-performing child support enforcement programs were eligible for additional funding. With the

limitation included in the final bill, however, States like Wisconsin were suddenly penalized for their hard work and success. These states saw their child support dollars disappear--and were faced with tough budgeting decisions at both the state and county levels. Within a year, child support offices in my State were forced to lay off workers and many were left with no option but to scale back services.

Congress took a step towards fixing the problem as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The Recovery bill temporarily restored the funding process that was in place before the Deficit Reduction Act, and allowed States--for fiscal years 2009 and 2010--to draw down much needed Federal matching funds. In Wisconsin, the need was so great that some offices used that funding to hire temporary staff--to clear case backloads and assist the constituents who have been hurt by the funding cuts.

This is a short term solution--to a problem that Congress created. It is time to fix that problem. The economy has left families struggling, and child support is a lifeline for many of them. It is time to give States and counties the ability to budget beyond the coming year. It is time to help the thousands of families who rely on child support payments to stay out of poverty and off public assistance. It is time for my colleagues to join me in supporting, and to pass, the Child Support Enforcement Act.