



CWLA and AAICAMA Policy Update

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I. Legislation: Wrapping up the 118th Congress- *What passed, what did not*

Budget and Appropriations: After no small amount of drama, Congress passed a Continuing Resolution (CR) to keep the government funded through March 14, 2025 early Saturday morning, avoiding a government shutdown before leaving town, marking the end of the 118th Congress. The initial CR that was released on Tuesday included huge wins for advocates for children and families; most notably, it included four years of funding to replace stolen SNAP benefits, and \$500M in childcare funding within the disaster relief funds. It also included the Title IV-B reauthorization bill, and several other last-minute reauthorizations.

After outcry from conservatives and from the President-Elect and Vice-President-Elect, the final CR that passed on Saturday was a much smaller compromise, stripped of the reauthorizations and other funding increases. The SNAP benefit replacement funds were not included in the final bill, and neither was the Title IV-B reauthorization, although this was passed by the Senate separately. The additional \$500M childcare funding did stay in the disaster relief package.

The new Congress and Administration will need to address Appropriations early next year; if they have not passed the budget bills by April 1st, it will trigger an across-the-board cut, or sequester, for both Defense and Non-defense programs.

Child Welfare Policy: In the early hours of December 21, 2024, the Senate wrapped up the 118th Congress by passing a Continuing Resolution (CR) to fund the government until March 14th, extending the Appropriations deadline into the new Congress.

The Senate passed several House-passed bills in their wrap-up session, including the Supporting America's Children and Families Act, which reauthorizes Title IV-B and increases funding for the Promoting Safe and Stable Families program; CWLA endorsed this bill and released this statement on its passage. Congress passed other child welfare legislation last year, including:

1. The Native American Child Protection Act. Introduced by Representative Gallego (D-AZ) and Senators Lujan (D-NM) and Collins (R-ME), this bill revises the Indian Child Protection and Family Violence Prevention Program to encourage the use of culturally appropriate treatment services and programs. It also directs the newly renamed National Indian Child Resource and Family Services Center to develop model intergovernmental agreements between tribes and states to ensure maximum cooperation to prevent, treat, and prosecute incidents of family violence and child abuse and child neglect involving Indian children and families.

2. The Stop Institutional Child Abuse Act (SICAA). Championed by Paris Hilton, this act requires the Department of Health and Human Services to contract with the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to identify the nature, prevalence, severity, and scope of child abuse, neglect, and deaths in youth residential programs and to make recommendations. CWLA endorsed this legislation.

II. The New Congress: What We Know So Far

Bills that have been introduced/passed so far: The Laken Riley Act is a bill that requires the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to detain illegal immigrants admitting to, charged with, or convicted of theft-related crimes, assaulting a police officer, or a crime that results in death or serious bodily injury like drunk driving. The Act also allows states to sue the Department of Homeland Security for alleged failures in immigration enforcement.

The bill was introduced following the murder of Laken Riley by an undocumented immigrant who had previously been cited for shoplifting, on the campus of the University of Georgia in Athens, Georgia. The bill has passed both the House and the Senate, but there were amendments in the Senate, so it goes back to the House. It is likely to pass.

Reconciliation & the Debt Ceiling: The 119th Congress officially began on January 3, 2025, when Vice President Harris certified the election results, and the new members of Congress were sworn in. There are several major funding negotiations to come over the next six months, from Appropriations to reconciliation to the debt ceiling, and the Majority party has laid out a list of [spending reform options](#) that would slash federal spending on programs that provide vital support to millions of Americans. The list includes the following cuts that would dramatically impact children and families:

- Medicaid cuts. The list from the House Budget Committee outlines numerous reforms for Medicaid spending, including instituting per capita caps, lowering the FMAP reimbursement, and creating work requirements.
- Affordable Care Act. The proposal would end the premium tax credits that help many individuals with low incomes access health insurance.
- SNAP. The proposal would change the Thrifty Food Plan, the base plan that was expanded and modernized by the Biden Administration, taking food benefits away from families.
- SSBG. The list includes the elimination of the Social Services Block Grant, which is a flexible funding source that allows states and territories to tailor social service programming to their population's needs, including programs to protect children and adults from abuse and neglect.
- TANF. The proposal includes a 10% cut to the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program, as well as the elimination of the TANF Contingency Fund; these cuts would result in a reduction of cash assistance for families.
- CTC changes. The list includes a proposal to limit the child tax credit by requiring parents to have a Social Security Number to receive the benefit, thereby cutting off America children in mixed-status families.

Although this list is currently still just a starting point for negotiations, it is likely that some of these proposals will be included in a budget reconciliation package. Created in the 1970s, the reconciliation process is meant to address the national deficit. Because a reconciliation bill is not subject to the Senate filibuster, it can pass the Senate with 51 votes, making it an easier vehicle for the Majority party to pass their budgetary priorities.

Speaker Johnson has [stated](#) that he hopes to have a budget blueprint by the end of February, which is a first step in the reconciliation process. It is expected that the reconciliation package would focus on immigration spending and extending the tax cuts of 2017, with major cuts to human services and climate change initiatives offsetting these costs.

In addition to a reconciliation package, Congress will also need to address Appropriations by March 14th, the new deadline set in the Continuing Resolution last Congress, and deal with the debt limit this spring or summer.

III. Biden Administration's Final Days

Child Maltreatment 2023 Report: On January 8, 2025, the Children's Bureau released the annual child abuse and neglect report: [Child Maltreatment 2023](#). This year's report shows a continued decrease in child maltreatment; it reveals that of the nationally estimated 3,081,715 children who were the subject of a child welfare agency response in FY 2023, 546,159 children were determined to be victims of maltreatment. This is a 19.3 percent decrease from the FFY 2019 number of victims 677,099 reported by 52 states.

In the narrative portion of the report, states attribute the decrease in child maltreatment to improvements in screening tools, the resolution of backlogs, and the adoption of alternative response programs. Child fatalities also decreased slightly: an estimated 2,000 children died from abuse and neglect in FY 2023 compared to an estimated 2050 children during FY 2022.

TANF- Proposed rule is withdrawn: The Biden Administration [withdrew](#) its Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program that was published in October 2023 but had not been finalized, due to lack of sufficient time to address concerns raised in comments and the likelihood of a final rule being overturned by the new Congress and Administration.