

CENTER FOR FAMILY POLICY AND PRACTICE

23 N. Pinckney St., Suite 210, Madison, Wisconsin 53703

TEL 608.257.3148 FAX 608.257.4686

www.cffpp.org

POLICY BRIEFING

December 2004 _ Vol. 6, No. 10

Latest Bush Appointments Heighten Concern among Many Advocates

President Bush has made a number of appointments for his second term in office that will have an impact on low-income families, women, and persons of color. Among some of the recent appointments:

- Former Utah Governor and current U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Michael Leavitt was chosen by President Bush to replace Tommy Thompson as Director of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services on December 13. Leavitt has served 14 months as EPA Administrator. Despite the President's confidence in Leavitt, the following concerns have been raised by groups familiar with his record:
 - ◇ During his tenure as Utah Governor, the state's child welfare system was the subject of a class action lawsuit alleging that the system was so mismanaged that it violated the constitutional rights of every child in custody. The lawsuit resulted in a settlement agreement, but over subsequent years the state resisted making the reforms necessary to comply with the agreement.
 - ◇ The League of Conservation Voters describes Leavitt's record in Utah as "a governor actively rolling back environmental protections while publicly projecting concern about the environment." The LCV charges that as governor, Leavitt "made a deal to remove six million acres of Utah's public lands from protection against development and road-building and on the issue of clean water, recent EPA studies show that Leavitt's Utah is tied for last place in enforcing the Clean Water Act."
 - ◇ There has been a controversial push in recent years to fund marriage promotion activities using TANF funds. Leavitt created Utah's Governor's Commission on Marriage and signed a Marriage Proclamation in 1998 that recognized marriage as a public good. In 1999, he proclaimed National Marriage Day and Marriage Awareness Week.
- For further information, see the National Center for Youth Law, www.youthlaw.org; *State Policies to Promote Marriage*, The Lewin Group, www.lewin.com; and the League of Conservation Voters, www.lcv.org.
- In another appointment, President Bush has named Dr. W. David Hager to serve as Chairman of the Food & Drug Administration's Reproductive Health Drugs Advisory Committee. The Committee is an 11-member panel that has significant influence on women's health policy. Dr. Hager is author of the book, *As Jesus Cared for Women*:

Restoring Women Then and Now. According to the Endometriosis Research Center, the book emphasizes the "restorative power of Jesus Christ in one's life" and recommends Scripture readings and prayers for headaches and premenstrual syndrome. Dr. Hager has extremely strong ties to the Christian Medical Association and to the anti-abortion group Focus on the Family.

See <http://www.endocenter.org/hager.htm>.

- President Bush has also announced his appointment of Gerald Reynolds to replace Mary Frances Berry as chairman of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. Ms. Berry resigned the position this month. Mr. Reynolds' nomination to serve as the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Education in 2002 was met with "strong opposition" by the NAACP. Kweisi Mfume, NAACP President at the time stated then that, "Reynolds has consistently called for the elimination of a variety of programs that have helped racial and ethnic minorities, as well as women, the elderly, and disabled Americans. It is inconceivable that a person with such strong convictions should be charged with implementing and protecting the laws for which he has shown such contempt."

See www.naacp.org and www.freep.com/voices/editorials

Abstinence-Only Curricula Found to Contain Misinformation

A report prepared by the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Government Reform – Minority Staff at the request of Representative Henry Waxman (D-CA) evaluates the content of the most commonly-used curricula among federal abstinence education grantees. Abstinence education has expanded rapidly under the Bush administration, doubling to \$170 million in fiscal year 2005. Millions of children now receive abstinence-only education, which promotes abstinence from sexual activity and excludes information on contraception. According to the report, the curricula used in these programs are not reviewed by the federal government for accuracy.

The report finds that over 80% of the abstinence-only curricula used by over two-thirds of the grantees of the largest federal abstinence-only initiative contain false, misleading, or distorted information about reproductive health. Among the specific findings:

- False statements about the effectiveness of contraceptives are presented as scientific fact in many of the abstinence-only curricula that were studied. Curricula were found to include such misinformation as, "the popular claim that 'condoms help prevent the spread of STDs,' is not supported by the data"; and "in heterosexual sex, condoms fail to prevent HIV approximately 31% of the time". Another states that a pregnancy occurs one out of every seven times that couples use condoms.
- The curricula contain false information about the risks associated with abortion. One curriculum states that 5% to 10% of women who have legal abortions will become sterile; that "premature birth, a major cause of mental retardation, is increased following the abortion of a first pregnancy"; and that "tubal and cervical pregnancies are increased following abortions." In fact, these risks do not rise after the procedure used in most abortions in the United States.
- The curricula present religious beliefs and gender stereotypes as scientific fact. Many of the curricula stated that life begins at conception. One curriculum calls a 43-day-old fetus a "thinking person." Women are presented as needing financial support while men

need admiration in one curriculum. Another instructs that women gauge their happiness and success on their relationships but that men's happiness hinges on their accomplishments.

- Scientific errors, such as listing exposure to sweat and tears as a risk factor for HIV transmission, were found in numerous instances.

The report, *The Content of Federally Funded Abstinence-Only Programs* is available at www.democrats.reform.house.gov.

Sixth Annual TANF Report on Child Support Collections Available

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families has prepared its sixth annual report to Congress on the TANF program. Child support collections are included as a part of the reporting. The Child Support Collections report includes the following information:

- Nearly 49% of the 16 million child support cases in the caseload nationally had a child support collection, up from 38% in 1999.
- Total administrative expenditures were \$5.2 billion, a 28% increase from 1999.
- Of the total fiscal year 2002 families in the child support caseload, 36.6% have never received public assistance. These families received 50.4% of the total distributed child support collections. Almost 46% of families in the caseload are former public assistance recipients, and these families received 41.2% of collections. Families currently receiving public assistance represented 17.5% of the caseload, and 8.4% of collections. The "current assistance" caseload has declined 15% since fiscal year 2000.

The report, *Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF): Sixth Annual Report to Congress*, is available at www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/annualreport6.

Please Note: The next Policy Briefing will be available in February 2005.