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State Group Calls on U.S. House to Vote Against Increased Cuts to Vital Programs *House Expected to Vote Oct. 20 to Increase Cuts to \$50 B*

(October 19, 2005) -- Today, Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families (AACF) called on Congressman John Boozman to vote “no” on a new budget plan that would require deeper cuts in health care, nutrition, and other key services for vulnerable people, while providing for new, costly tax cuts for the wealthy. As a result, this budget plan would actually worsen the deficit, not improve it. The House of Representatives is expected to vote on this new budget plan as soon as Thursday, October 20.

“The last thing we should be doing after the hurricane experience is plunging other families deeper into poverty by cutting Medicaid, food stamps, and other critical resources,” said AACF executive director, Rich Huddleston. “This new budget would hurt vulnerable children, people with disabilities, and the elderly in our state and we urge Congressman Boozman to vote it down.”

Here in Arkansas, the programs targeted for federal budget cuts provide critical services to thousands of vulnerable people. The Medicaid program provides health care coverage for 605,000 people in Arkansas. Supplemental Security Income (SSI) provides basic income for 88,000 elderly people and people with severe disabilities in Arkansas. 278,000 working families in Arkansas receive the Earned Income Tax Credit. And more than 372,000 people in Arkansas put food on the table each day with the help of the Food Stamp program. <http://www.cbpp.org/pubs/accomplishments.htm>

The new House budget plan may also call for deeper cuts in a range of “domestic discretionary” programs, such as Head Start, housing assistance, and K-12 education.

“It makes no sense to heap the burden of paying for hurricane relief on key domestic priorities. While our nation does face severe long-term fiscal challenges, they should be approached in a spirit of shared sacrifice,” Rhonda Sanders AACF director of health policy concluded. “Congress should place a priority on meeting the needs of vulnerable families, rather than cutting vital services or dispensing unnecessary and costly tax breaks to millionaires.”

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