

## **Child Poverty**

### **1. What are your plans to ensure that (a) comprehensive health care, (b) quality educational opportunity beginning with appropriate pre-school programs, and (c) food security are available for all at-risk, vulnerable children?**

I took office in the middle of the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression, threatening the security of families across the country. I took immediate action to address the crisis. Today, we know that the Recovery Act kept nearly 7 million people out of poverty in 2010, including 2.5 million children, by expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit, enacting the Making Work Pay tax credit, and supporting unemployment insurance and supplemental nutrition assistance. The Recovery Act strengthened Medicaid during the worst of the recession and helped ensure that millions of families had food security to weather the downturn. These steps helped families working their way to self-sufficiency and provided a lifeline for millions of people who needed tools to get back on their feet, stay in school, and rejoin the workforce. While there is more work to do, we have seen 31 consecutive months of private sector job creation, where businesses created 5.2 million jobs.

But it isn't enough to get back to where we were before the crisis; we needed to take steps to grow the economy from the middle out – not the top down. And that means making the middle-class bigger and stronger.

In 2009, I was proud to sign legislation expanding the successful Children's Health Insurance Program. And Obamacare will help all Americans not only obtain health care coverage but also become more secure in the coverage they have. Because of the law, 14 million children have seen their coverage for preventive care – like well-child visits and immunizations – expanded, and insurance companies can no longer deny coverage to children with pre-existing conditions. Starting in 2014, all Americans will have access to affordable coverage for their family, and 30 million Americans are expected to gain insurance as a result.

High quality early childhood education is among the smartest investments that we can make. Participation in high-quality early learning programs—including Head Start, public and private pre-K, and child care—will provide children from disadvantaged backgrounds with a strong start and a foundation for school success. We're spurring states to raise their standards so all children have access to a quality education, and we're working to make college more accessible and affordable for everyone.

### **2. What will you pledge to do in your first 100 days to address childhood poverty?**

I will continue efforts to invest in early childhood education and to reform these programs to strengthen their quality. I am also proud to say that the Affordable Care Act is already well on the way to bringing access to comprehensive and preventive health care to millions of children who have, until now, been locked out. I will continue to fight for a solution to our budget challenges that allows us to continue to invest in things, like education and training, to move our economy forward in ways that lead to greater opportunity and shared prosperity.

And I will continue to invest in opportunities for all hard-working Americans to enter the middle class. I am committed to reforming our tax code to prevent a tax increase on families making less than \$250,000 a year, including an extension of the tax cuts for working families included in the Recovery Act. I have proposed steps in the American Jobs Act that will accelerate the recovery and create nearly 1 million jobs. The plan would help states keep up to 325,000 teachers, as well as thousands of police officers and firefighters, on the job. I am also calling for immediate new investments to repair crumbling schools, roads, and bridges that would put hundreds of thousands of construction workers back to work now and strengthen our economy for the long term.

**3. What is your long-term vision for how to permanently ensure that future generation of children will not have to face the specter of crushing poverty?**

I believe that we need to reform our schools and invest more in them. My Race to the Top initiative spurred nearly every state to raise academic standards and we are waiving the worst parts of No Child Left Behind for states and districts committed to reform. Today, we are seeing some of the worst schools in the country produce double-digit gains in test scores. I ended billions in wasteful subsidies to big banks in the student loan industry, doubled college scholarships, and cut taxes on college tuition by \$10,000 over four years. Now, I have set a goal to cut the growth of college tuition in half, and create partnerships between community colleges and businesses to train 2 million workers for jobs that exist now.

Finally, we need to pay special attention to areas that might otherwise not share in prosperity. We need to transform high-poverty neighborhoods with distressed public housing and crumbling schools into communities that are sustainable for the growth of our children. That's why my administration developed the Choice Neighborhoods programs to address housing, crime, and transportation in order to bring comprehensive neighborhood revitalization to blighted areas. We also launched the Promise Neighborhoods program, modeled after the successful Harlem Children's Zone, where 37 communities in 18 different states already have plans in place to put education at the center of combating poverty. The program is based on the idea that children need support inside the classroom as well as outside of class in order to succeed. Finally, Project Rebuild will create 200,000 jobs by rehabilitating homes and stabilizing home prices in hard-hit neighborhoods.