



The Kid Angle

Kid-focused news from First Focus on Children

What the new Congress means for kids

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The fight over House Speaker not only provided four days of wonk drama, it delivered new House rules that will change what gets done and how they do it. One thing, however, is clear: If the word “children” comes up at all, the conversation will most likely center on adults.

Here are 3 things we’re watching:

Cuts to children’s health and nutrition programs: The new House rules around the debt ceiling/budget cuts/mandatory funding threaten programs like Medicaid and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which play a pivotal role in the health of millions of children. We expect to see significant proposals to slash Medicaid and SNAP through block grants, per capita caps, work requirements or other zombie policy proposals. *Note:* SNAP and WIC are both slated for updates, so we’ll watch to see whether these new rules interfere with those.

The future of child poverty: New House budget processes require that any increases in mandatory funding streams (i.e. Social Security/Medicare/unemployment compensation) must be offset by **cuts** in other mandatory funding streams (i.e. Medicaid, veteran’s benefits). **The practical implications of this rule:** Any attempt to expand the Child Tax Credit or Earned Income Tax Credit to reach a greater number of low-income families (using the “refundable” mechanism, covered under mandatory funding) will require cuts to other mandatory programs such as Medicare, Social Security, veterans’ benefits or unemployment insurance (and we know how that will go). On the flip side, there are *no* barriers to making deep tax cuts for the wealthy. (Excellent [summary here](#) from the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy.)

The encroachment of “parental rights” on children’s well-being: When many of the new lawmakers mentioned “children” on the campaign trail it was in the context of “parental rights.” As we saw in the last Congress — when the conversation around the Child Tax Credit became about whether the adults in their lives deserved the money — focusing on adults means kids lose. With attacks expected on public education, vaccines, children’s health care and other issues, lawmakers must ensure that children — not their parents or caregivers — remain at the center of the issues.

In all this gloom, **one development could be positive for children** (inadvertently so, of course). If the new House leadership goes through with its stated intention of requiring actual votes on amendments (instead of the giant, vote-free, end-of-year bills that have become *de rigueur*), children likely will benefit. Because if you have to put your name on it, you probably want to vote in the best interest of children. Right? We can only hope.





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