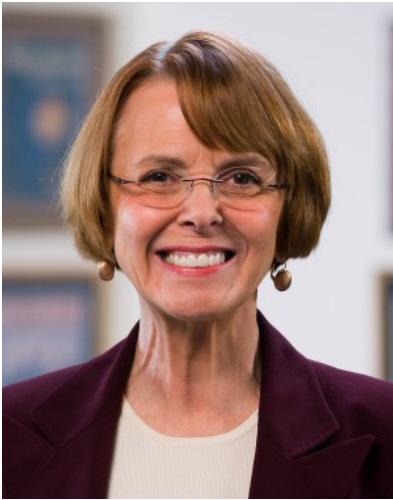


2010 Voter's Guide

U.S. Senatorial Candidates' Views on Children and Families



Iowa Attorney
Roxanne Conlin
Democratic Candidate



Incumbent U.S. Senator
Chuck Grassley
Republican Candidate

Developed as a public service by:
Every Child Counts



About the Guide

The 2010 Voter's Guide presents the views of incumbent U.S. Senator Chuck Grassley and Iowa attorney Roxanne Conlin on 11 important child and family policy issues. The candidates submitted written responses to each issue. Directions to the candidates were to keep their responses to individual questions to 150 words or less. As we committed to them, their responses are provided here, without editing or comment.

The Voter's Guide has been used successfully in four previous elections, and Iowans have appreciated receiving the Guide as it provides them with insight into each candidates' views on specific public policy issues that impact Iowa's children and families. The endorsing organizations listed below thank the candidates for their responses to these questions and their commitment to the state and its children and families.

Endorsing Organizations

Child Care Resource and Referral of Central
Iowa

Child and Family Policy Center

Every Child Counts

Every Child Matters

Iowa Afterschool Alliance

Iowa Association for the Education of Young
Children

Iowa Association of School Boards

Iowa Cancer Society

Iowa Community College Early Childhood
Alliance

Iowa Foster and Adoptive Parents Association

Iowa Community Action Association

Iowa Conference of the United Methodist
Church

Iowa Head Start Association

The Joan & Lyle Middleton Center for
Children's Rights at the Drake University
Law School

National Association of Social Workers, Iowa
Chapter

Orchard Place

Prevent Child Abuse Iowa

Polk County Empowerment

RESULTS

School Administrators Of Iowa

State Public Policy Group

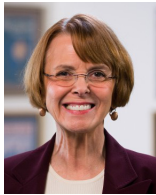
Visiting Nurse Services of Iowa



The Federal Budget and Children

According to the Urban Institute, the federal share of the non-defense budget that has gone to invest in children and their families has declined significantly over the last two decades. Further, the aging of America's society and the projected costs of meeting commitments under social security and Medicare threaten to subsume nearly the entire federal discretionary budget that has been used to invest in children and their families. Without substantial additional federal tax revenues or dramatic shifts in federal approaches to health care costs, social security, and other issues, the federal government's investment in children and families almost certainly will decline.

As U.S. Senator, what will you do to ensure that needed investments in children and youth are made at the federal level?



CONLIN: Children and families must come first. We must ensure that essential programs are fully funded and overseen by committed individuals who believe in their mission. To accomplish this, we must identify our nation's spending priorities and make certain that programs designed to protect, medicate, and educate the leaders of the next generation are among the top priorities. We should be examining federal spending to make sure that we are spending efficiently; removing wasteful, fraudulent, and abusive spending and redirecting those funds to areas where the money is desperately needed.



GRASSLEY: Too often, federal expenditures are used as a way to concentrate decisions that affect children and families in Washington, D.C. instead of empowering parents, teachers and local communities. This causes a mismatch between local needs and the federal response as well as an additional layer of bureaucracy. I will work to maintain funding for programs that empower parents, families and teachers and redirect funding from programs that take decisions away from those most affected.

Primary and Secondary Education: ESEA Reauthorization

Iowans place a very high value on education. The 112th Congress is expected to take action to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, named No Child Left Behind. While controversial, No Child Left Behind has called the question on disparities in student achievement and identified many “low-performing” schools where children are at particular risk.

Meanwhile, while historically Iowa has been a leader among states in overall fourth and eighth grade student reading and mathematics scores, Iowa today ranks in the bottom half of states on these measures. Students preparing for the 21st century economy require much higher skills than in the past, and this requires a world class educational system, with the federal government playing a significant role in funding services to those most in need under Title I.

As U.S. Senator, what changes, if any, will you make in ESEA and to support actions that can ensure Iowa students acquire the skills needed for the 21st century economy?



GRASSLEY: No Child Left Behind promised increased flexibility for educators and local school districts who know best how to meet the educational needs of their students in return

for accountability for results. Unfortunately, the final product resulted in a very detailed and rigid federal testing and accountability system while the proposed flexibility was watered down. I am cosponsoring a bill to maintain a flexible accountability system that gives parents useful information about their child’s education while returning key decisions about how to meet a child’s educational needs to states and local school districts closer to the parents.



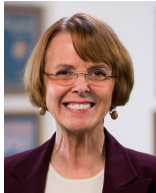
CONLIN: We must work to improve education by fixing No Child Left Behind and setting new standards for schools. No Child Left Behind had some of the right goals, such as

measuring the success of students to close achievement gaps, but without adequate funding the program is simply another unfunded federal mandate. The program takes a rigid, narrow approach in measuring student achievement and paradoxically punishes the schools most in need of assistance. We must create a new program that is flexible, provides support for educators, establishes a system that rewards student progress, and is fully funded by the federal government.

Food Security and Obesity

Good nutrition and exercise in childhood are keys to lifelong healthy growth and development. Currently in Iowa, however, studies show that a significant portion of the child population suffers from food insecurity and even malnutrition. At the same time, childhood obesity rates have skyrocketed. In part due to these threats, for the first time in Iowa's and the country's history, children face the prospect of being less healthy and living less long than their parents. The federal government plays a major role in making food available through Supplementary Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, but there remain challenges in making healthy food options available for children and their families that can address the twin threats of malnutrition and obesity.

As U.S. Senator, what will you do to improve child nutrition and combat the twin threats of malnutrition and obesity?



CONLIN: This problem needs to be addressed at both home and at school. The federal government must continue to provide SNAP benefits, as those are essential to ensuring

that children have the opportunity to receive nutritious meals. As part of that, we must enable our schools to teach nutrition so that our children are making wise food decisions and understand the effects of their diet on both their physical and mental well-being. Further, it is essential that we examine the foods that are served at school. We cannot serve high calorie, salty, sugary foods in our school cafeterias, especially to underprivileged children on free and reduced lunch. This intake will affect that child's later food decisions, their weight, and their ability to concentrate in the classroom.



GRASSLEY: I am committed to the nutritional needs of our nation's youth. In many cases, the meals received by students through Federal programs are the only healthy, well-balanced

meals they receive daily.

As a Member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, I supported the 2008 Farm Bill. The Nutrition Title of this new law authorizes important programs which help to ensure our nation's children receive proper nutrition. A child's nutritional health is critical to their learning and development. We need to combat childhood obesity effectively to address this issue. The 2008 Farm Bill expanded the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program. This program provides free fresh fruits and vegetables to low-income children in schools and over ten years, \$1 billion will be invested in this initiative.

In the Agriculture Committee, we considered the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act. This bill includes \$4.5 billion in new funding for child nutrition programs. I supported its **(response continued on page 14)**

Early Childhood (Birth to Three)

Both under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and federal health reform, the 111th Congress provided additional funding to states for child care, Head Start and Early Head Start, and evidenced-based home visiting. Further, Congress directed states to establish Early Childhood Advisory Councils to strengthen early childhood systems. Research has shown that up to half of all subsequent school difficulties and student dropout is evident at the time of school entry and major gaps exist at age three by socio-economic status. While Head Start has been the largest single investment Congress has made to address disparities in child development by income, it still serves a minority of those it could benefit and is projected, if fully funded, to be able to narrow kindergarten gaps by only about one-fifth.

As U.S. Senator, what do you believe should be the federal government's role in ensuring that children start school healthy and prepared for success?



GRASSLEY: The first years of a child's life are a crucial time in their development and it is important that all children have access to enriching and nurturing experiences in their early years, but each child's needs are unique and each family's situation is different. Federal, state, and local early childhood policies should be flexible to ensure that parents have sufficient options and choices to fit their circumstances and meet their child's needs.

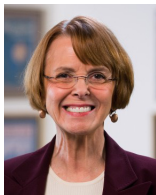


CONLIN: I favor universal early childhood education. Head Start was designed to give under-privileged kids a "head start" on learning skills by teaching those tasks they would not learn at home. It is imperative that programs such as Head Start are available for all children who lack the opportunity, but have the ability and the desire. We must invest to prepare our children for a worldwide economy, especially in the areas of math and science education. It's the right thing to do for our children, and for our economic future.

Child Health

Both through state and federal actions, Iowa has expanded its health coverage for children and is one of the leading states in ensuring all children have health coverage. While the majority of children currently are covered under private health insurance, more than one-third are covered under Medicaid or hawk-i and expansion of these federal-state programs is the reason that child health coverage in Iowa has increased. States are now under substantial financial pressures that could affect their ability to pay their share of Medicaid expenditures. While states are given major responsibility to implement health reform, the federal government remains a critical partner.

As U.S. Senator, what will you do at the federal level to enable Iowa to provide a child health delivery system – building on or changing Medicaid, CHIP/hawk-i, and IowaCares – that ensures children have access to the primary, preventive, and comprehensive health services they need, including oral health?



CONLIN: Improving access to health care for children is a moral imperative. There is no excuse for the wealthiest nation in the history of the world cannot provide health insurance to its most vulnerable. When health care reform is fully in force, the need for special programs for children may diminish, but it unlikely to disappear. We must ensure that health care is available to children, to only treat their illnesses and maladies as those arise, but to also prevent future illness through preventative care and health education.



GRASSLEY: Under health care reform, the Medicaid program will be expanding to become the single largest provider of health care coverage in America. For Medicaid to be an effective and efficient provider of high quality health care services for the people who depend on the program, the federal government will need to provide resources and flexibility to the states that run the program. With many states, including Iowa, facing serious budget challenges this year and into the future, the federal government needs to be extremely careful not to place undue burdens on the states that will force states to choose between funding education, roads and bridges, or law enforcement and providing quality care in Medicaid. If states are not provided adequate resources and flexibility in running the Medicaid program, finding access to a doctor will be a serious challenge in the future for Medicaid recipients.

Child Safety and Welfare

Parents have the primary responsibility for raising their children, but society also has the responsibility to ensure children are safe and receive necessary care. The Iowa child protective service system (including investigations of abuse and neglect, provision of family-centered services, and provision of foster care and adoptive services) has been under increased financial pressure. Children in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems often become “systems children,” without supportive ties to their communities. The 111th Congress enacted the Fostering Connections Act that placed increasing requirements on states to provide transitions to adulthood for children who have been involved in foster care, but much more needs to be done to ensure that the permanence and well-being, as well as safety, of children is provided.

As U.S. Senator, what changes will you support to strengthen federal child welfare policy to ensure states meet system goals of permanence and well-being as well as safety?



GRASSLEY: The *Deficit Reduction Act of 2005* included funding I championed for grants to train judges, attorneys and legal personnel in child welfare cases, as well as grants to improve collaboration between courts and child welfare agencies



CONLIN: I will work to ensure that these programs are not just another unfunded mandate and that the states are given the resources necessary to implement the objectives and achieve the goals set forth.

In 2006, we passed the *Child and Family Services Improvement Act* which I developed as Finance Committee Chairman. The legislation improved programs aimed at helping troubled families, provided grants for states and community organizations to combat substance abuse, and increased caseworker visits for children in foster care.

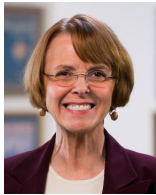
In 2008, I led the effort to pass the *Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoption Act*. It included my provisions making it easier for foster children to be permanently cared for by their relatives and to stay in their home communities. It allowed all special needs children to be eligible for federal adoption assistance.

I worked to pass the Adoption and Safe Families Act of **(response continued on page 14)**

Family Economic Stability

Federal welfare reform efforts in the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act have resulted in a decline in the number of families on the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program by more than one-half in Iowa and the United States, with many of those families now in the workforce. At the same time, many of these families have moved from being on welfare to being among the “working poor,” still struggling to make ends meet. Children continue to be the age group most likely to be poor, and even temporary poverty has been shown to have long-term impacts upon children. Prior to the recession, there were efforts in a number of states, including Iowa, to reduce poverty by at least fifty percent, which in Iowa would mean 50,000 fewer poor children.

As U.S. Senator, what will you do to address child poverty, including any further changes to the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act, as it is up for reauthorization?



CONLIN: Because I have experienced poverty, I know the devastating effect it has on children and families. It is inexcusable that, in the United States, we still have difficulty addressing the issue of children in poverty.



GRASSLEY: The demographics of the welfare caseload are changing. Children, particularly so-called TANF child-only cases, which are cases where the child is a sole recipient of a welfare check, are increasingly becoming the largest percentage of welfare recipients. There are many reasons why children become child-only welfare cases, but more needs to be done to ensure that they are receiving the appropriate amount of assistance and support.

The 2008 Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions bill, which I helped author, provides an option to states to allow children eligible for foster care to establish a permanent placement with a relative. It may be the case that a number of child-only welfare cases could benefit from a permanent placement with a caring adult relative.

I have asked the Government Accountability Office to prepare an analysis on TANF child only cases. During the reauthorization of the TANF programs, I will **(response continued on page 14)**

Federal Tax Policy and Children

The federal earned income tax credit now represents the largest federal investment in working, low-income children and their families, much larger than TANF and successful in lifting many families out of poverty. Other tax policies, such as the child tax credit and reduction of the “marriage tax penalty,” have reduced tax burdens for middle-income families with children, in particular. Some of these are scheduled to expire at the end of 2012, along with a number of other tax provisions. At the same time, reauthorizing all the federal tax provisions would have the effect of increasing the federal budget deficit or requiring major cutbacks of current investments in children, or both.

As U.S. Senator, what will you do to develop federal tax policy that is both child and family friendly?



GRASSLEY: I have been at the forefront on passage of many tax relief measures into law to help our children and families. As Chairman or Ranking Member of the Senate

Finance Committee over the last decade I have helped to extend the Earned Income Tax Credit, expand tax benefits for new school construction bonding, extend and expand the Child Tax Credit and eliminate the marriage penalty tax.

Also, as Chairman of the Committee, I led the effort to lower the lowest income tax bracket all the way down to just 10%. This is of great benefit to the working poor who struggle in trying to move ahead in life and save or invest for themselves and their family.

As well, I have been the lead proponent of trying to get rid of the Alternative Minimal Tax (AMT). This tax is a trap that captures working families never intended to have
(response continued on page 14)



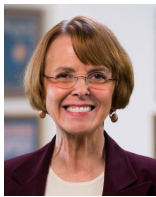
CONLIN: We must work to reduce the tax burden upon those who can least afford it by reducing and eliminating any regressive tax policies currently in place. Further, we

must identify those behaviors that we want to reward through tax credits; such as the child tax credit and the earned income tax credit. In addition, we must open the doors to higher education and remove the financial barriers that so many lower and middle class families face by examining and implementing a means to deduct college tuition. I support extending the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts for the middle class and to lower the deficit, I support letting the tax cuts expire for the top 2%.

Diversity and Equity

Iowa is becoming more diverse as a state, and children are leading the way. Children of color now represent 15% of all Iowa children, and these numbers continue to rise. At the same time, children of color fare significantly worse on many measures of child well-being – poverty, low birthweight, child abuse and neglect, school dropout, and juvenile delinquency. Educators and service providers themselves generally do not reflect the diversity of the children they serve.

As U.S. Senator, what actions will you take to address current disparities in outcomes for children of color and ensure culturally competent services?



CONLIN: We must work to stress the importance of education, and then we must provide an excellent education to help end this cycle. We need to take action to ensure that our

young minority students will become role models for future generations by entering fields such as education and child service providers.



GRASSLEY: Of course, discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, or cultural background should not be tolerated. Building on a provision I helped craft in the

Higher Education Act, all educators should have training in differentiating instruction to meet the diverse learning needs of individual students so each child can reach his or her potential. Service providers should be trained to understand and meet the specific needs of individuals and families whatever their background.

Immigrant Children

A very significant portion of America's diverse child population comes from immigrant families, both documented and undocumented. Some state and federal policies place restrictions upon serving immigrant children that can impact their health, safety, education, and development. Immigration policy is a child issue. Children of immigrant parents can have their lives disrupted in the enforcement of immigration policies on their parents. Immigration policy is a child issue.

As U.S. Senator, what role should the federal government play regarding immigration policy and providing for immigrant children and their health, education, and other needs?



GRASSLEY: The federal government holds the prime responsibility regarding immigration policy and in 1982, the Supreme Court held (in *Plyer v. Doe*) that all children

and students from kindergarten thru the 12th grade children, regardless of their legal status, have the right to an education in the United States.



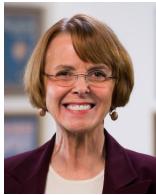
CONLIN: Only the Federal Government can make immigration policy and as part of our Constitution, a child born within our borders is a United States citizen and

enjoys the same privileges and benefits as all other citizens, and efforts to restrict access to health, education, and other needs are reprehensible. As we have seen with the fallout from the ICE raid in Postville, there are many instances in which families are separated or facing the difficult situation of deportation. We must work to balance family cohesion and the immigration laws. I also support the DREAM Act.

Role of Government in Valuing and Strengthening Families

Parents are their children’s most important teachers and strong communities are needed to support families in this role. Government cannot and should not serve as a substitute for a child’s family and community. At the same time, too many families struggle to provide the nurturing and stable home environment all children need. Through poverty, parental stress, depression, addiction, or mental illness, too many children are vulnerable to a host of poor child outcomes and an ability to themselves become contributing adults and parents as they develop. Increased mobility and family stress also have produced what some have called a “breakdown of the family” in America. The media and negative role models among some celebrities has contributed to risky and negative youth behavior. Government cannot solve these issues, but leaders within government can set a vision and direction for government in strengthening and supporting families and family values.

As U.S. Senator, what leadership role will you take to strengthen families and family life in Iowa?



CONLIN: My own family includes two children James and I took into our home when they were teenagers. One of them had a significant juvenile and drug history. All four of

our children are remarkably contributing and caring adults. As a United States Senator, I would work to end the cycles that cause these bad outcomes. I would take action to improve our economy and employment situation, improve education, provide more opportunity for upward mobility, end policies that place further burdens on the poor or that incentivize bad behaviors.



GRASSLEY: Well-meaning federal programs that seek to assist families in ways that limit the decision making power and responsibilities of families can actually contribute to the

“breakdown of the family.” To some extent, welfare programs being strengthened are an example. I will work to ensure that federal programs seeking to assist families don’t rob them of the dignity of self-sufficiency but empower them to meet their own needs. I will continue to work to allow Iowa’s families to keep more of their hard-earned paycheck by fighting to ease their federal tax burden. Also, controlling spending and reducing our debts and deficits can help lead to a stronger dollar, control interests rates and provide a more promising economic climate for the American family.

Food Security and Obesity - Continued Responses

GRASSLEY: (continued from page 5) passage in Committee. It includes demonstration projects increasing the amount of nutritious foods, expanding farm to school programs and nutrition standards for foods sold outside the school lunch program. I hope this bill is signed into law soon.

Child Safety and Welfare - Continued Responses

GRASSLEY: (continued from page 8) 1997. Since its enactment, adoptions increased to 54,000 per year. This year, I established the Senate Caucus on Foster Youth. The Caucus holds briefings and working sessions on next steps to improve the child welfare system.

Family Economic Stability - Continued Responses

GRASSLEY: (continued from page 9) work to ensure that these children have increased opportunities for support and, if appropriate needed services.

Federal Tax Policy and Children - Continued Responses

GRASSLEY: (continued from page 10) to fall under the unfair treatment of the AMT.

For more information, contact:

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A limited number of copies are available through Every Child Counts. This Guide is also available for download in PDF format at www.itsaboutourkids.org



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