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Contact: Ted Boettner 304.346.5891
Full Report at www.wvcag.org

New Federal Budget Will Cost West Virginia Millions, Most Vulnerable Will Be Cut, New Report Finds

Charleston, WV— West Virginia Citizen Action Group, a non-profit statewide public-interest organization, today released a report finding that budget decisions being made in Washington, D.C. this month could have a serious impact on families in West Virginia.

The report, entitled, “*The Federal Budget: What’s At Stake for West Virginia,*” examines federal budget-cutting legislation that is currently being hashed out between the House and Senate, and how it would affect low-income families in West Virginia. This legislation could be voted on as soon as December 14th.

“*Congress is at a moral crossroads. Our elected leaders can either protect the safety net, which ensures that thousands of vulnerable West Virginians have adequate food, medical care, and child care, or they could make it even harder for families to make ends meet,*” said CAG spokesman Ted Boetter.

The report takes a close look at who is currently helped by key programs that are on the federal chopping block, and finds that:

- The **Medicaid** program provides health and long-term care coverage for 297, 800 people in West Virginia, including children, their parents, the elderly, and people with disabilities. The House budget bill allows families to be charged new fees and reduces covered services, both of which would increase the ranks of the uninsured and the underinsured.
- The **Child Support Enforcement** program in West Virginia collected \$158,469,493 in child support on behalf of West Virginia children in 2004. West Virginia would lose \$36 million in child support enforcement funding under the House bill and the cuts would result in an estimated \$114 million in child support going uncollected over the next ten years.
- 266,510 people in West Virginia families put food on the table each day with the help of their **Food Stamps**. The House budget bill would terminate food stamp benefits to 255,000 nationally by 2008.
- The **Supplemental Security Income** program provides basic income for 76,000 elderly people and people with severe disabilities in West Virginia. The House bill would force many individuals with disabilities to wait longer to receive the SSI benefits they need to make ends meet.

The report also notes that the House bill makes costly changes in welfare rules that would impose significant costs on West Virginia’s budget, limit the state’s ability to design effective welfare-to-work programs, and lead to thousands of children losing access to child care.

“*The last thing we should do this holiday season is jeopardize help for the most vulnerable people in our state. Congress should make the right moral choice, and reject these harmful budget cuts,*” Boettner concluded, “*especially in light of the 90 plus billion dollars in tax cuts for the wealthy now in process.*”

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