

Remarks, on behalf of Congressman Les AuCoin,  
by Mark Gaede  
to the Oregon Chapter,  
National Committee on the Prevention of Child Abuse  
November 19, 1982

I'm pleased to be able to speak to you today, on behalf of Congressman Les AuCoin.

Les is sorry that he is not able to be with you. You're probably aware that Congress will begin a lame duck session on November 29th and he is now back there preparing for that.

Les wanted me to pass on his commendations for all of the hard work you've done this past year. He is proud of your accomplishments. The Oregon Chapter of the National Committee on the Prevention of Child Abuse has done an excellent job in working on child abuse problems.

Congressman AuCoin is also pleased to serve as an honorary board member of your chapter. He is willing to work with you and do all he can to support your efforts to prevent child abuse.

Before updating you on child and family related legislation, it's important to put these issues in perspective.

Oregon, along with the rest of the nation, continues to face serious economic problems.

The distressed economy results in extremely high unemployment and individual stress problems. It is partially responsible for the increase of 865 child abuse reports in Oregon in 1981.

Keep that in mind as we consider the deep need for federal support of children's programs. Keep it in mind as we look at the Administration's attempts to cut these programs.

Since 1980, our nation's policy on social services radically changed. Priorities have been altered.

Between 1981 and 1983, federal support for social services will have been reduced almost 20 percent.

These cuts affect the entire federal spectrum of policies and programs relating to children, youth, and families.

The most thorough analysis of those changes to date was issued two months ago by the Urban Institute. Their report concludes that these Congressional actions will affect this nation for a decade.

Perhaps Congressman George Miller, an advocate for children's issues, summed it up best during debate on the House floor. He said that the time has come for Members of Congress to assess the results and ramifications of the decisions Congress made in the past two years.

What are these particular decisions?

You know that the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act and the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act offer vulnerable children in this country protection and the hope of permanent families.

But, the Administration, despite its rhetoric about protecting the truly needy, strengthening families, and saving dollars, proposed the repeal of both of these Acts.

The Administration also wanted to include the programs addressed by each Act in the Social Services Block Grant with no protections for abused or homeless children.

In its FY 1983 budget, the Administration proposed, once again, to include child welfare programs in a block grant. This block grant includes child welfare services and training programs, foster care and adoption assistance programs.

The proposed funding level of \$380 million eliminates a needy child's entitlement to basic foster care and adoption assistance. This funding is at least 18 percent below the current funding levels for these programs.

Passage of the block grant effectively repeals the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act. States could no longer receive fiscal incentives to develop protections for individual children in case. Incentives for states to develop cost effective programs to keep families together and to reunify separated families would be eliminated.

At the same time, other proposed cuts will also undermine basic family supports, forcing more and more families to turn to the child welfare system as a last resort. These budget reductions include \$2 million in the state grant portion of the child abuse program.

In 1982, funds for Title XX, the major federal program for social services was cut 23 percent. Assistance under Title XX goes to core services needed to help families under pressure: protection for abused children, and day care and homemaker services that can prevent child abuse.

Fortunately, Congress did not ~~agree with the Administration on these issues~~ <sup>give the Administration everything</sup> ~~it wanted.~~

Both the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act and the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act remained intact in the budget reconciliation process. However, funding for the child abuse program was reduced from \$23 million in Fiscal Year 1981 to about \$17 million in FY 1982.

The Administration submitted child welfare block grant legislation to Congress, but no bill has been introduced yet.

At the end of September, the Appropriations Committee reported out a funding bill for the Department of Health and Human Services.

The Committee provided monies for child welfare services, child welfare training, and adoption assistance at the Fiscal Year 1982 levels.

The Committee also recommended keeping child abuse programs at their current funding levels.

In addition to funding bills, other child and family related legislation has been considered by the 97th Congress.

House Resolution 421 to create a Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families was approved two months ago. Congressman AuCoin strongly supported passage of this legislation.

The Committee will be responsible for providing continual review and assessment of the needs, status and interests of children, youth, and families.

The Select Committee enjoys bi-partisan support. Over 225 Members of Congress representing every point on the ideological spectrum sponsored this resolution. Organizations endorsing the resolution represent professionals and constituencies in numerous fields including medicine, health, child welfare and others.

As a co-sponsor of House Resolution 421, Les AuCoin felt such a special committee was necessary to look at issues affecting our nation's youth.

Children represent one-third of our country's population. They, however, often lack adequate attention in our legislative process.

Currently, there are 64 million children in the U.S. affected by federal policies and programs in the areas of education, employment, health and nutrition, law enforcement, and economic policy.

Although the Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families comes as good news, Congressman AuCoin wants to give you several words of caution. Those words are: The Family Protection Act.

The Family Protection Act is dangerous.

The Act contains more than 30 separate proposals. It affects key areas of family life and federal law including child abuse, education block grants, and numerous provisions of federal law.

Most of the provisions in the Act reflect themes advocated by the Administration and the New Right, and constitute a major step backward from national commitments to fundamental protections for children and other vulnerable groups in society.

The Family Protection Act purports to decrease the role of government in family life. But it imposes a fine of up to \$5,000 per day on those who violate the Act.

There's also a provision against private agencies' and programs' receiving federal funds to prevent and treat child abuse and neglect -- unless the state legislature first votes its approval of the grant.

~~The Act, supported by the New Right, will probably never be dealt with by Congress in its entirety. It's much too complex.~~

The New Right's influence, however, appears to be weakening. Many of the legislation's backers were defeated in the November election.

~~The election also brought about changes in the make-up of the House of Representatives. It will most likely have lasting effects.~~

~~It is also likely to change the politics of the House of Representatives in years to come.~~

There are 81 new House members - 57 of them Democrats.

These new Democrats tend to be liberal. They will force the Administration to search harder for votes.

*new Democratic members* } ~~They will probably go down in history as the group who resurrected traditional liberal issues from the graveyard. Most of them built their campaigns around a defense of the social programs the Administration has been seeking to cut.~~

Congress will do its part to enact programs which provide for the needs of children.

You must do yours too.

Les AuCoin encourages you to get involved in the political process. You can make a difference.

Of utmost importance is for you to communicate your views to Les AuCoin. Letters and phone calls are valuable. Establish contact with the AuCoin office. Let him know the need in Oregon for these programs. With facts and figures provided by you, Les AuCoin has a strong case to build on in Congress.

Organize lobbies on the grass-roots level. The more support you can gather on the local level, the more support you'll have in Congress.

Also, work through your National Committee. It, too, has the resources to lobby in Congress.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Congressman AuCoin wants me to leave you with one final thought.

The future of child abuse programs is in question.

The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act must be reauthorized next year. The House Education and Labor Committee is not anticipating any major changes in the Act.

But, Les AuCoin wants to work closely with you during the 98th Congress to make sure this law remains intact.