

Republican Themes
Hearing on Challenges Facing the Child Welfare System
May 15, 2007

1. Some argue the key challenges facing child welfare systems all have to do with Federal underfunding of programs.
2. That's not true. According to the Child Welfare League of America, taxpayers currently spend more than \$23 billion per year for child protection and foster care and adoption programs, counting all the various programs involved. Funding rises year after year, yet State systems fail to adequately protect children in too many cases.
3. Instead, the real key challenges include (1) better preventing abuse and neglect from occurring in the first place, and (2) better ensuring the safety, permanency, and well-being of children in foster care.
4. Both key challenges must be met for systems to improve. Without better prevention, too many children will linger in foster care; and if too many children are in foster care, State systems will be overwhelmed and children will suffer.
5. Some areas have shown progress, but they are all too rare; recent positive examples include Illinois and New York City. And Congress in 2006 passed laws targeting more funds for child abuse prevention and holding States more accountable for results.
6. Still, too many other areas like Nevada have continued to show how children suffer and die when systems fail to protect them. In too many places, this system has a very long way to go to ensure that children are adequately protected.