

Republican Themes
Hearing on Child Welfare Reform Proposals
February 27, 2008

1. Chairman McDermott introduced legislation (H.R. 5466) to “reform” the child welfare system by increasing spending on foster care, caseworker salaries and expenses, and services.
 - a. The bill is long on spending, and short on real reform.
 - b. A CBO estimate of H.R. 5466 has been requested but is not yet available.

2. The McDermott bill suggests a key problem behind today’s child welfare system is too little spending.
 - a. But 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.
 - b. Funding rises year after year, yet State systems fail to adequately protect children in too many cases.

3. The real challenges facing the child welfare system involve the need for real reforms to prevent abuse and neglect, and to better ensure the safety of children in foster care.
 - a. Progress has been rare under current program rules.
 - b. Simply increasing the number of children in the Federal foster care system and Federal spending on them and that system – as the McDermott bill proposes – might even make matters worse.

4. Instead of debating legislation that won’t pass this year, the Subcommittee should focus on reauthorizing the successful adoption incentive program that expires this year.
 - a. This is an opportunity for bipartisan activity on legislation that is actually needed and that will help more kids know the love of permanent families.