



Legislative Updates

January 12, 2009

Legislative Links

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Idaho State Legislature 2009 Legislative Session

Legislators gather for the start of the session

Today marks the beginning of the 2009 Legislative Session and a fresh start for advocates statewide. With the economic developments of the last few months and recent announcements by Governor Otter, it's no surprise that this session will present major challenges for Idaho's citizen legislature. We encourage you to get to know your legislators: get active and make sure your voice is heard when issues you care about are a focus of proposed legislation.

IVC's 2009 Policy Priorities

Below you will find a list of the major efforts that we will be focused on during the course of the legislative session. To see the full "2009 Policy Priorities" document, [click here](#).

IVC's 2009 Policy Priorities	
Issue Area	Policy Priority
Child Health & Safety	IVC will work towards increasing the numbers of children enrolled in the Idaho Health Plan Coverage for Children (Medicaid and S-CHIP) by encouraging the State of Idaho to provide ongoing high quality outreach, implement a streamlined health insurance application process and establish the eligibility level of S-CHIP at 200% Federal Poverty Level (FPL) . Given the difficult economic conditions we are not pursuing an increase in eligibility this year.
Early Learning (legislation)	IVC will work towards the establishment of a committee to provide a means to bring together gubernatorial representative(s), legislative leaders, and key stakeholders concerned with the early learning of young children (ages 0-5 years) in Idaho and begin the work towards establishing a quality rating system that will meet the needs of Idaho's children and families.
Child Welfare (legislation)	IVC will advance legislation to enhance the legal process and strengthen the legal supports for relatives caring for related children (a.k.a. "Grand Families") by supporting legislation that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reforms the Idaho de facto custodian provisions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Better define the circumstances under which an individual has standing as a de facto custodian - Better defines how de facto custodians can pursue custody of a child and what legal rights are accorded the de facto custodian when custody is granted by the court. 2. Reforms the Grandparent Visitation Statues to better clarify position of grandparents' rights to visit related children. 3. Reforms the Child Protective Act to require that the Idaho Department of Health & Welfare to actively consider whether a child may be safely placed with relatives in lieu of non-relative foster care.
Emerging Issues	<p>Many children's issues are addressed during the session that do not fall directly under the stated 2009 Policy Priorities. IVC will continue to support efforts to: raise the eligibility rate for the Idaho Child Care Program; expand children's health care coverage; improve child care regulations; provide quality early learning opportunities; provide supports for low-income working families; and strengthen sentencing in child abuse cases (Jessica's Law).</p> <p>We will also continue to track legislation that falls under the IVC mission statement: <i>Idaho Voices for Children is a statewide organization that develops and promotes a policy agenda that improves child health, child welfare, education, safety, and family economic security.</i></p>

Other Issues We Support

[Click here to read the full "2009 Policy Priorities" document](#) which includes a list of our overarching beliefs and 3 - 5 year goals. IVC's Board of Directors will determine our official position on specific legislation where appropriate.

What's Happening This Week

January 12th - Governor Otter will deliver the State of the State Address at 3:00 PM today. Check your local listings.

January 15th - Joint Education Committee Meeting, 3:00 pm [\(click here for agenda\)](#)

At the end of last session we informed you that the Chairmen of the House and Senate Education Committees (Representative Bob Nonini and Senator John Goedde) had requested that the staff of the Legislative Services Office (LSO) undertake research on Idaho's early education programs. The requested research was completed during the interim, and we believe that Paul Headlee, LSO Senior Budget Analyst may present the report at this meeting.

IVC: Advocacy at the Federal level

In late December 2008 the IVC Health Care Workgroup sent a letter to the Department of Health & Human Services (HSS) Transition Team for the Obama - Biden Transition. The letter encourages the Transition Team to consider establishing a floor of 200% of the federal poverty level (FPL) for the S-CHIP program when the reauthorization legislation is crafted (this was the intended floor when SCHIP was passed in 1997, and as of this writing only three states including Idaho have not increased financial eligibility for children to 200% FPL).

Mandating that every state provide SCHIP to 200% FPL would clearly establish a national threshold for children's coverage and prevent individual states from arbitrarily reducing coverage during economic downturns when more children are probably in need of assistance.

The letter also emphasized that simplification, outreach and collaboration with community partners needs to be clearly mandated in the legislation.

Stay tuned for our next Legislative Update!



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- Become a child advocate today! Donate to IVC and receive regular legislative updates.
- Support our work and lend your voice in support of Idaho's 374,000 children (Idaho Kids Count 2007)

Donate by visiting our website, www.idahovoices.org/support/join.htm

This legislative report has been sent to all *Idaho Voices for Children* members. If you have questions or wish to remove your name from this mailing list, email Sara Herring at sara@idahovoices.org or call 208. 336. 5533 x 233

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is a proud member of
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