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NEWS IN BRIEF



Poverty Report Card Released

Produced by **Natalie Moore** on Monday, March 10, 2008

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A Chicago-based center that fights poverty released a scorecard today rating congressional votes on the issue in 2007. According to the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law, Illinois' poverty rate ranks 26th nationally. That means nearly 1.5 million people live in poverty.

This is the first time Shriver has rated votes in Congress. The center says only two pieces of anti-poverty legislation—increasing the minimum wage and funding Head Start—passed last year.

Most of the Illinois delegation got a Shriver grade of "C" or higher. Only Dan Manzullo, who represents portions of northern Illinois, received an "F."

Dan Lesser, an attorney with Shriver, says the report was done to raise public awareness.

LESSER: We think it's very important to fairly evaluate the performance of every member of Congress. Our intent it to circulate this widely.

Neither senator Barack Obama nor Hillary Clinton voted enough on the selected poverty-related legislation to be scored in the study. Dick Durbin got an A plus.

Lesser says an important measure that failed last year would've extended statewide funding for childrens' health insurance.

In a conference call, former North Carolina Sen. John Edwards says the Shriver analysis helps breakdown some poverty myths.

EDWARDS: A lot of Americans don't understand that people who live in poverty and struggling to survive, millions of those people are working. Shriver says anti-poverty bills are hard to pass because many members of Congress aren't paying attention to the issue.

I'm Natalie Moore, Chicago Public Radio.

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