



**PRESS RELEASE**

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**2008 Congressional Votes Begin Change in Washington-  
*Poverty Scorecard Shows Willingness to Act***

(CHICAGO)— Congress pushed past the distractions of the election year to get more done on poverty-related measures in 2008 than the year before, according to the only national analysis that ranks Members of Congress solely on their performance in fighting poverty, released today.

The Shriver Center's 2008 *Poverty Scorecard*, [www.povertyscorecard.org](http://www.povertyscorecard.org), acts as a year-end report card for every member of Congress. The Scorecard assigns letter grades to each member of the United States Senate and House of Representatives according to their voting records on the most important poverty-related issues that came to a vote in 2008.

In the Scorecard, four of the most important anti-poverty bills that Congress considered during 2008 passed both the House and Senate and were signed into law by President Bush. Two more were signed into law after being substantially amended; making a grand total of six important anti-poverty measures that became law. These bills address aspects of the economic downturn such as the housing crisis, unemployment compensation and the impact of high credit costs on students. Although Congress considered more important anti-poverty bills in 2007 than in 2008, only three of them passed both the House and Senate and were signed into law by President Bush.

“Overcoming poverty is a huge job that requires national leadership now more than ever,” said John Bouman, Shriver Center president. “We hope to use the Scorecard to elevate the subject of poverty in the national policy dialogue, educate the public about why certain votes are important to promoting equal opportunity, and improve legislators’ voting records by demonstrating that they will have to be accountable on these issues.”

These votes, as well as in-depth bill summaries, poverty rate by Congressional district, analysis from the Shriver Center, and links to antipoverty resources, make up the interactive website through which users can simply click on a map to learn how well their representatives are working to end poverty:

- Although half of all Senators had a perfect A+ voting record and over half of all Representatives ranked an A or A+, only five of the 18 bills in the Scorecard passed both Houses and were signed into law by the President.
- Several states with high poverty rates have Congressional delegations that had poor records in supporting measures to fight poverty. (Kentucky’s poverty rate is the fifth highest in the country, but its Congressional delegation ranked the 40<sup>th</sup> lowest of the 50 states.)

“No matter what your ideology, I think we all can agree that government needs to take some role in providing economic opportunities to all Americans during a tough financial climate,” Bouman concluded. “We are looking for members of Congress to realize their performances on these issues are being assessed.”

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*The Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law, a national resource, champions law and policy promoting equal opportunity and support for low-income individuals, families, and communities so that they can escape poverty permanently.*