

News Release

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NEWLY RELEASED 2010 POVERTY SCORECARD SHOWS CONGRESSIONAL MEMBERS WITH WORST VOTING RECORDS ON ANTI-POVERTY MEASURES COME FROM STATES WITH SOME OF THE HIGHEST POVERTY LEVELS

In the biggest economic crisis since the Great Depression, some Congressional members don't vote for poverty-fighting legislation

(CHICAGO – FEBRUARY 7th) The Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law (the Shriver Center) today released its annual *Poverty Scorecard*, which grades members of Congress on their voting performance on the fifteen or so most important anti-poverty measures of the year. The Shriver Center worked with experts in approximately 20 different subject areas to identify which votes to use in the scoring.

“This is the fourth year that we’ve published the *Poverty Scorecard*,” said Dan Lesser, Director, Economic Security, Shriver Center. “We publish the Scorecard for the sake of transparency; so that people are able to see what their elected officials are doing to fight poverty. Our senators and representatives need to be held accountable for their efforts, or lack thereof, in this fight.”

With the help of national anti-poverty experts, the Shriver Center identified the 14 Senate votes and 16 House votes that were most significant in fighting poverty. Each congressional member was assigned a letter grade, A+ through F-, based on their voting performance. Members who did not vote on enough bills were not graded. Unsurprisingly, there is often a negative correlation between a state’s poverty rate and the voting record of its members, meaning the states with the highest poverty rates had delegations with the lowest average scores in voting to fight poverty. Other findings:

- Significant compromise meant that a higher percentage of bills counted in the *Poverty Scorecard* was passed in 2010 than in prior years. It also meant that the bills lost some of their intended impact. For example, health care reform did not include a public option and the cost of child nutrition reauthorization was offset by a cut in future Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.

- In contrast to the discovery that there's a negative correlation between a state's poverty rate and the voting records of its members, we also found that several states with higher than average poverty rates have Congressional delegates with good records in voting to fight poverty.
- A significant percentage of Congressional delegates with poor voting records on anti-poverty measures are from Southern states.

“With a mind-boggling 44 million Americans living in poverty in 2009; it was imperative that our elected representatives enact measures in 2010 to try to reverse the trend,” said Lesser. “Some of them chose to act, while some didn't, and we as voters need to know that. In total, we graded 428 out of 435 representatives and 99 out of 100 senators. Of those numbers, four senators and nine representatives received an F- for voting against anti-poverty legislation every single time and 15 senators and 165 representatives received an A+ for a perfect voting record. These numbers need improvement if we're going to turn the tide on the epidemic.”

The complete 2010 Poverty Scorecard can be found online at www.povertyscorecard.org.

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The Shriver Center provides national leadership in efforts identifying, developing, and supporting creative and collaborative approaches to social and economic justice for low-income people. The Shriver Center fulfills its legal advocacy and policy development through a comprehensive set of initiatives, including representing low-income people on a variety of issues that affect their social and economic well-being and managing communications and access to poverty law strategies and policy-related information.