

## **Budget Passes Senate, but Will Go Back to the House for Final Approval in January**

ByCarolynn Race

[December 21, 2005] Senate passes budget reconciliation bill, 51-50

This morning, the Senate voted 51-50 to pass its \$40 billion budget cut package, including deep cuts to Medicaid, child care, child support, and student aid. No food stamp cuts were included in the conference report. The package also includes reauthorization of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program (TANF) with stringent new work requirements that the Congressional Budget Office estimates may cost state governments \$8.4 billion over the next five years to finance welfare-to-work programs to meet the new requirements. The conference report includes \$1 billion in additional child care funding over five years, which, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities notes is "\$7.4 billion less than CBO estimates to be the cost to states of meeting the new work requirements, and more than \$11 billion less than what states will need both to meet the new work requirements and to ensure that their current child care programs for low-income working families not on TANF do not have to be scaled back as a result of the impact of inflation on child care costs."

All Democrats voted against the conference report and were joined by five Republicans: Mr. Chafee (RI), Ms. Snowe (ME), Ms. Collins (ME), Mr. DeWine (OH), and Mr. Smith (OR). Vice President Cheney was called in to break the 50-50 tie.

HOWEVER, PRIOR TO THE VOTE, SENATORS AGREED TO A BUDGET POINT OF ORDER, MEANING THE SENATE-PASSED BILL IS NOW DIFFERENT THAN THE HOUSE-PASSED BILL AND MUST GO BACK TO THE HOUSE FOR FINAL APPROVAL. SINCE THE HOUSE IS NOT EXPECTED TO COME BACK THIS YEAR, THE VOTE IS EXPECTED IN 2006.

Thank you for all your work raising concerns about the impact these reductions would have on those most in need. Merry Christmas.

-- Carolynn Race

### General Assembly Policy:

The 207th General Assembly (1995) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) called on Congress "to defeat any proposals that base budget or deficit reductions primarily on the services provided to children, families, the needy, and the homeless" and urged strengthening of federal commitments to these groups. The Assembly also called on Congress "to insist on a government that follows ethical values of justice for the poor, welfare for children, hospitality to the stranger, and assistance to the disadvantaged." (Minutes, p. 718)

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