

The candidates on issues: Child care [US] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

For Sean and Elizabeth Pokorny, nothing compares to the struggle they face paying for daycare.

Out here, in two-income America, he's a mechanic and she's an accountant. The monthly cost of daycare, around \$1,000, breaks the family bank.

"Child care is the largest expense I have," says Elizabeth. "It exceeds everything." It's higher than rent, higher than food, she says. "It's higher than everything we have."

Sean says, "We have come to a point, well, do we send the children to a good daycare or do we send them to a not-so-good daycare so we can pay for it?"

John Kerry has tapped into that fear with two expensive promises on child care: expanded after-school programs for 3.5 million children, and the big one, raising the tax deduction for child care from \$3,000 to \$5,000 per child.

"Child care has gone up," says Kerry. "So we can make it easier for parents to be able to afford the child care that people so desperately need."

Elizabeth says the Kerry plan gives her an extra \$800 a year &em; less than one month of her bill.

"\$800 is still more than what I have now and every penny in my situation counts," she says.

President Bush doesn't have a brand new child care proposal, but the tax deductions that are in the law now were increased in the Bush tax cut back in 2001.

The president also says that by increasing the child tax credit he has given parents cash to spend how they choose.

"We increased the child credit to \$1,000 per child," Mr. Bush said in February. "That helps moms and dads do their solemn duty to raise their children."

The Bush campaign does not promise new money for child care and argues Kerry has promised too much.

Elizabeth, meanwhile, says neither candidate understands what daycare means for the economy.

"If I can't come to work, then how am I going to spend money?" she asks.

Normally, the Pokornys are Republican. This year they are conflicted. On child care, Elizabeth says the president doesn't get the struggle of the middle class.

And Kerry doesn't get it enough.

- reprinted from CBS News.

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