

Kerry boosts child care; Democrat proposes adding \$20 billion to aid parents [US] ^[1]

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Source: Washington Post

Format: Article

Publication Date: 17 Jun 2004

AVAILABILITY

See text below.

EXCERPTS

Democratic presidential hopeful John F. Kerry pledged Wednesday to give working-class parents an additional \$20 billion in subsidies over 10 years to help cover child-care costs, significantly expanding existing programs.

The Massachusetts senator -- as part of his effort to focus on the woes of the middle class this week -- said that if elected president he would raise the child and dependent care tax credit to cover as much as \$5,000 in child-care expenses, an increase of the current \$3,000 credit. The plan would also for the first time offer the credit to stay-at-home parents.

In addition, Kerry's plan would launch "School's Open 'Til 6," expanding federal after-school care for working families so that 3.5 million children would be served, instead of the 1.5 million now using the program.

Kerry's campaign said that a couple earning \$60,000 and spending \$10,000 on child care for two children would get an additional \$800 tax cut under his plan.

Spokesman David Wade said that Kerry's additional child-care credit would be "fully paid for by his proposals to close corporate tax shelters," which Wade said could yield \$60 billion to \$80 billion. As for the after-school program, Wade said that it would be funded by rolling back President Bush's tax cuts for people earning more than \$200,000, and that it is money not already accounted for in Kerry's other spending proposals.

Bush campaign officials were quick to question how Kerry intends to pay for the expanded child-care programs. "All paid for by rolling back tax cuts for the wealthy, money that he has already spent 20 times over?" asked Bush spokesman Steve Schmidt. "This is a well that never stops giving."

Karen Kornbluh, director of the work and family program of the nonpartisan New America Foundation, said Kerry's proposal "shows an understanding that the economy and family issues are closely related, and I believe it will have broad appeal. We have a study that shows that a parent's stress level goes up when they don't have good after-school care and no job flexibility. It hurts productivity."

- reprinted from the Washington Post

Region: United States ^[2]

Tags: school-age ^[3]

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