

Winning Back Our Children's Future: Using Our 501(c)3 Superpowers

**A Conversation Among National, State, and
Grassroots Child Advocates and Friends**

**Addressing the Rogue Elephants in the Room and Charting a Better Path
for Federal Policy and Budgeting**

**Charlie Bruner, July, 2025 Presentation – bruner@childequity.org
Values to Votes Project of Grassroots Iowa Network**

What Can We Do to Win Back Our Children's Future? A Framework for Going Forward

Children and Families as a **Core Message and Constituency**

Emphasis Upon **Ongoing Responses to** Combat Multi-Tusked Threats to Children in Federal Budget

Use of 501(c)3 Education and Advocacy to promote a **Better Path Forward**

- Engagement of Additional Messengers and Dialogues
- Nonpartisan Convening and Relational Campaigning and Dialogue

Core Message and Constituency: The Narrative Framework

- Across urban and rural, professional and working class, high and low income, and across race, gender, faith, and party affiliation, voters care about children and want government to invest more in their future.
- Through bipartisan actions over the last sixty years, the federal government has built a foundation for investing in children and families that needs to be built upon.
- Through extreme and unilateral actions (rogue elephants), we now are confronted with a dismantling of virtually all aspects of that foundation, actions that are unpopular and destructive.
- We must review and redo those actions, and this requires nonpartisan child policy advocacy and grassroots community education and dialogue.

The Rogue Elephants in the Room

Being nonpartisan and value-based does not mean we should not challenge unilateral partisan actions that violate that value- base.

Today, that means we have to confront the elephant (and in this instance, rogue elephants) in the room.

The following slides set the narrative for doing so.

1965-2024 Bipartisan Federal Child Policy Advances

Child Health: Medicaid and CHIP, Vaccines for Children, Home-and-Community Waivers, Nutrition (SNAP, WIC, school meals), ECCS, Community Health Centers, etc.

Early Learning: Head Start/Early Head Start, CCDBG, Early Intervention, MIECHV, ECCS, etc.

Education: IDEA and Title One, National Education Goals, No Child Left Behind, Community Schools, 21st Century Learning Centers, etc.

Safety and Permanence: Title IV-e foster care and adoption assistance, Title IV-b child abuse prevention, etc.

Economic Security: Earned Income Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, Housing/Nutrition/Health Care supports

SIX DECADES OF
BIPARTISAN PROGRESS
SETTING A FOUNDATION
FOR OUR FUTURE



AT RISK OF TEARING IT DOWN: ROGUE ELEPHANTS IN THE OVAL, CONGRESSIONAL MEETING, AND EXECUTIVE OFFICE ROOMS



2025 Multi-Tusk Unilateral Federal Assaults on Child Policy

Oval Room: Executive orders and actions (DEI, Department of Education, DOGE), testing unilateral Presidential budgeting authority

Congressional Meeting Rooms: One Big Beautiful Bill Act for mandatory programs and taxes now moving to appropriations for discretionary spending and executive oversight

Executive Office Rooms: Reductions in force and terminations, anti-government appointments, destructive administrative rules, decimated administrative capacity

501(c)3 Superpowers

Beyond the Usual (Partisan) Advocates

Credible and evidenced-based voices on children and families

Collaborators and coalition-builders with other child-serving/advocating organizations

Solution-based grassroots convenors around children and public policy

Advocates who know the state political culture and Congressional delegation as constituents

Storytellers for those directly impacted



Next Steps for Child Advocacy and Grassroots Action

Prevent More Damage – Respond to events of day and ongoing discretionary appropriations in context of impact upon children.

Undo Damage that Has Been Done – Press for revisions to unilateral and unpopular tax and spending cuts so we protect and don't harm children.

Hold Elected Officials Accountable – Make actions and the need for a new path for children and families relate to the 2026 elections.

Build Political Will and Informed Electorate – Show a better path that builds upon the foundation set from 1965 through 2024.

Invest in State and Grassroots Federal Advocacy for Children – Present the opportunity and imperative through state and community dialogues based upon underlying values on government's role and responsibility to children.

Review and Redo – Congressional Budget Advocacy for 2025-6 (and Voter Action in 2026)

COLUMN A: Current Federal Actions (Unilateral R)

\$7+ billion on tax cuts (2017 and 2025 Budget Reconciliation), vast majority to wealthy businesses and corporations

\$2+ billion in spending cuts in mandatory (BR) and discretionary (DOGE) programs

\$5+ billion increase to federal deficit

COLUMN B: Proposed Alternative Path (Unilateral D)

\$3+ billion in tax revisions and enforcement, including additional tax fairness for families (increased CTC)

\$2+ billion in spending restorations and new investments

\$1+ billion in reduction of federal deficit

Press Congress Today to Remove Some From Column A and Add Some from Column B and Candidates in 2026 to Spell Out Their Redo Plans

Additional Information

Additional and more detailed reports and analyses of the federal budget can be provided by contacting Charlie Bruner (bruner@childequity.org)

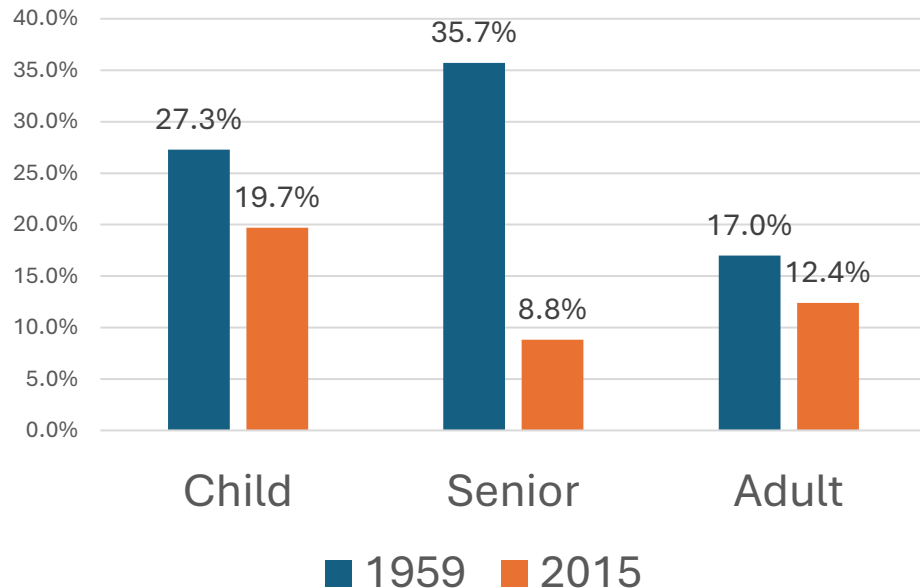
Charlie is developing a website: www.valuestovotes.com that will provide resources for grassroots leaders to preserve democracy and the future.

Charlie is developing additional slides to make specific points, a few of which are provided below.

It Began with the War on Poverty (Seniors Won But Now It's Time for Children)

(It's Not a War Between Old and Young: Grandparents Want a Better Future for their Grandkids)

Poverty by Age -- 1959-2015



Federal Budget Changes

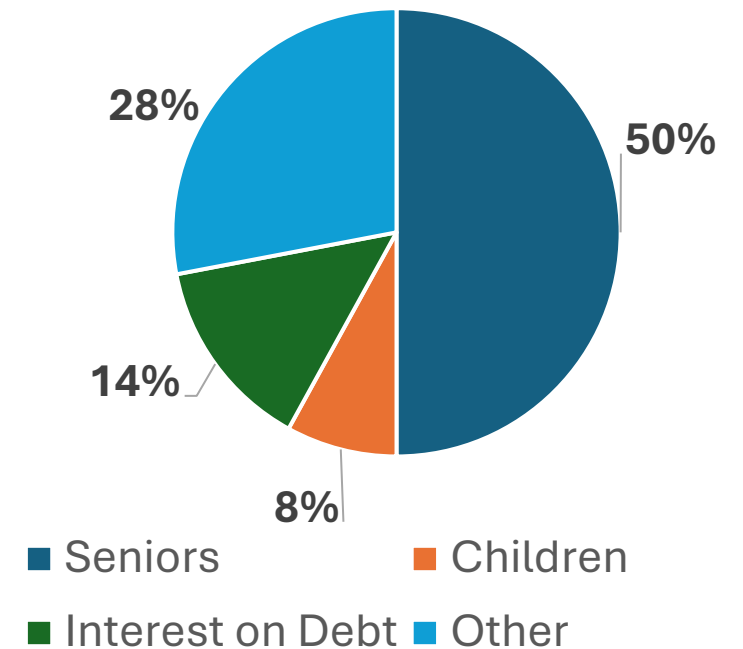
Seniors

Medicare
Social Security
1/2 of Medicaid/1/4 SNAP
VA Benefits +

Children

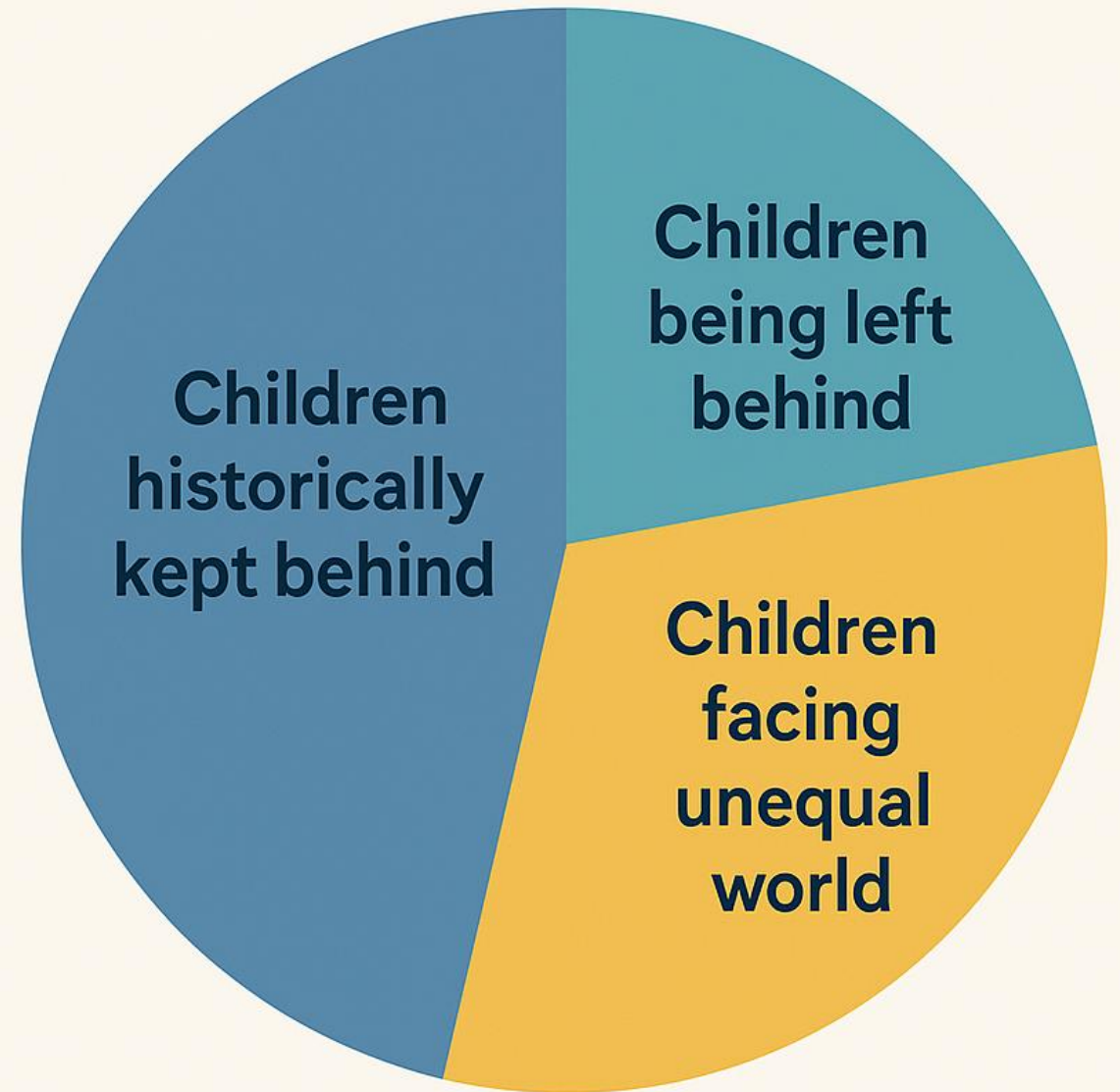
1/5 Medicaid/2/5 SNAP +

Federal Budget



Equal Opportunity for Every Child or There Won't Be a Middle Class

- BIPOC children (1/2) - historically kept behind
- White children in working class rural and small town America (1/6) - currently being left behind
- "Advantaged" children looking at an unhealthy, divided society (1/3) - facing an unequal world



Every Child Matters

Our Children's Future?

**Diversity,
Equity, and
Inclusion**



**Autocracy,
Discrimination,
Exclusion**



501(c)3
Child
Advocacy
Is Key

DEFEAT THE ROGUE ELEPHANT IN THE CLASSROOM



One Specific Doable Next Event: Step Up for Kids Reprise



State and Community Day of Dialogue
Co-hosted by Coalition of Nonpartisan State and
Community Groups Managed by State Child Policy
Advocacy Organizations

**(including Pass-Through Grants to State/Community
Lead Child Advocacy Organizations)**

Advertised and Supported by National Child and Family Policy
Organizations and FamiliesFirst Partners