

The Caring Family Policy Agenda

As practical as it is principled, the Caring Family Policy Agenda is based on the shared core moral principles of religion and humanism: caring, compassion, justice, and nonviolence. Its principles and programs are easily articulated and have powerful emotional appeal.

The Caring Family Agenda has three interacting components:

1. Children's Bill of Rights
2. Caring Family Values
3. Family-Friendly Economy

Why Focus on the Family?

- ***Humans must be cared for*** -- Unlike other species, it takes 18 years for human beings to fully develop. Most of this development takes place within the family. Sound family policies must be a top political and social priority.
- ***Our values, and ability to respect others, are shaped by our family experiences*** -- Families are the primary transmitters of values. It is in families that people develop the core belief systems that consciously or unconsciously determine how we engage in all facets of our lives, from the personal to the political
- ***Well developed humans are critical to successful democratic societies*** -- People are the real wealth of nations. Families contribute significantly to the development of authentic, creative human beings, preparing them to seek innovative solutions to the challenges of the postindustrial era.

We want to stimulate the development of family policies, including legislation and ballot initiatives, needed for a healthy equitable, and productive society.

1. Children's Bill of Rights

The Children's Bill of Rights strengthens the rights of children to have a fair opportunity to grow up healthy and thrive. It includes the right to shelter, nutrition, health care, education, freedom from violence, and a clean environment.

- ***Care for Every Child.*** Ensuring that all children have high quality health care and childcare. This benefits children, families, the economy, and society.
- ***Preschool for All.*** Guaranteeing access to comprehensive preschool education as a basis for life-long learning.

- ***Quality Education.*** Focusing on the quality of each individual child's education, including the arts, music, literature and science, rather than on high stakes testing.
- ***Safe Children Initiative.*** Protecting children from violence in the family, in schools, and when children are in the custody of the state.
- ***Prevention First: Ensuring Every Child Is Wanted.*** Comprehensive sexuality and relationships education in the public schools is the key to protecting teenagers from unwanted pregnancies, ensuring that every child is born to loving parents prepared for this important responsibility.
- ***Safety and Good Loving Care for Children in Foster Care and Adoptive Homes and Rehabilitation of Children in State Custody.*** This saves lives – and tax dollars.
- ***High Standards for Professional Training and Living Wages for Childcare workers and Early Childhood Teachers.*** This is an essential investment in our children's future.

2. Caring Family Values

Families based on partnership, mutual respect, and caring are foundational to a free, equal, and democratic society.

The Caring Family Policy Agenda can be embraced by all – right and left, liberal and conservative, secular and religious. We must further this agenda to build strong healthy families and a just, caring, and prosperous society.

- ***Education for Responsible and Loving Family Relations.*** Mandatory family life education in schools, including parenting education based on scientific findings about best parenting practices.
- ***Safe Families Initiative.*** Better enforcement of domestic violence laws, and increased state funding for shelters for battered women and children are critical to stop intimate violence, which teaches children that it is acceptable to use violence to impose one's will on others.
- ***Retirement Security for Caregivers.*** Because today social security only covers work in the market, women over 65, most of them caregivers, are twice as poor as men. We must recognize the value of the work of care giving in families through changes in our social security system.
- ***Fulfilling the American Dream of Equality.*** Equality between women and men promotes healthy relationships as well as a healthy, democratic, and caring society.

- ***Respecting Every Family Initiative.*** It is America's moral duty to respect and support every committed family constellation, including blended families many of whom are raising children in common.

3. Family-Friendly American Economy

Studies show that worker productivity rises exponentially when there is a life/work balance – that investment in families and children ensures a stronger economy and a healthier society. This is an investment that the nation must make, our corporations cannot carry it alone and still compete in a global economy.

- ***National Family Health Initiative.*** An affordable national health care system, prenatal to lifelong, focusing on wellness and prevention of illness is essential not only for human wellbeing but for national wellbeing. It is unfair to put this burden solely on employers, it is our job as a democratic nation.
- ***State-funded Child Care*** with well-trained licensed caregivers, as well as tax and other incentives for employers to provide good childcare.
- ***Universal Paid Family Leave for Part- and Full-Time Employees*** including family and medical leave for both fathers and mothers of babies as well as caregivers for elderly parents provided by the state or through tax and other incentives for employers.
- ***Inclusion of the Caregiving Work Done in Households in GNP and Other Measures of Economic Productivity.*** Statistical analyses in the U.S. and other nations show that the value of unpaid work is the largest contributor to economic productivity.
- ***Living Wage Legislation*** enacted at the local, state and federal levels, which should also include equal pay for work of equal value.
- ***Caregiver Tax Credit*** to give visibility and value to the invisible caregivers that keep our economy going, and for those below the poverty line, a stipend in the amount of the credit as a step toward addressing the disproportionate poverty of caregivers.
- ***Workplace Rules that Enable Parents to Spend Time with Children,*** including flex time, telecommuting, and increased vacation and sick leave.
- ***Laws that Phase Out Corporate Practices that Harm Families and Children*** – from toxic dumps and other forms of environmental pollution, to marketing of unhealthy food and drinks to children.
- ***Incentives Encouraging Environmentally Friendly Practices*** –Individuals and businesses must be encouraged to use science, conservation, and restoration to protect our natural environment.