

The Take Care Net Presidential Candidate Survey December 27, 2007

On October 26, 2007, the Take Care Net sent a Candidate Survey to the 12 major contenders in the presidential primaries to gauge their support for policies supporting child care, child care workers, other paid and unpaid family caregivers, and victims of domestic violence (See Table 1 for survey and response tally). The survey covered a wide spectrum of issues related to working families, to ensure that individuals can be both good employees *and* good family members. The survey effort was co-sponsored by the Labor Project for Working Families, MomsRising.org, the Mothers' Movement Online, the National Council of Women's Organizations, the New York State Paid Family Leave Coalition, Take Back Your Time, and 9to5, the National Association of Working Women.

We received responses from the following Democratic candidates by December 20, 2007: Hilary Clinton, Christopher Dodd, John Edwards, Barack Obama, and Bill Richardson. On the Democratic side, only Joe Biden and Dennis Kucinich did not respond. Of the Republican candidates who received the survey – Rudy Guiliani, Mitt Romney, John McCain, Mike Huckabee, and Tom Tancredo – none responded.

The survey asked specific questions regarding support for additional funding on education and child care, access to and funding for family and medical leave, support for family caregivers, policies to improve paid caregiving, protections for part-time workers, and general work/life balance. It also invited the candidates to explain their priorities in their own words.

The candidates who responded to the survey showed very strong commitment to expanding public policy supports for care work. Indeed, all of the respondents supported the following 15 policies:

- Increasing funding for child care under TANF.
- Increasing funding for child care in general.
- Increasing federal funding for after-school care.
- Public funding for universal, voluntary pre-school programs.
- Expanding access to FMLA to employees in firms of 25 or more.
- Allowing leave for appointments related to domestic violence.
- Ensuring employers provide employees a minimum number of paid sick days to care for their family member's routine illness.
- Allowing federal agencies to offer their employees paid parental leave.
- Supporting parity in pay and pro-rated benefits for part-time workers.
- Requiring states not to exclude part-time workers from eligibility for unemployment insurance,
- Providing scholarships for education and training and increased compensation to attract and retain qualified child care providers.
- Indexing the minimum wage to productivity and inflation.

- Limiting mandatory overtime for health and safety professionals.
- Creating and enforcing staffing ratios and caseload limits in nursing homes and child care center.
- Providing employees the right to request flexible work arrangements where it can be done as a reasonable business accommodation.

Taken together, these policies would represent a dramatic shift in the way the U.S. treats its working families. For example, parents of infants would be better able to take time with their children, be assured that the children will grow up with health care coverage, and know that quality, affordable child care will be available, that elders and children will have a safe environment in nursing homes and child care centers, and that employees will not be forced to choose between caring for a sick child or parent and holding down a job. This vision for a better and more humane society is both clear and attainable.

Dodd and Richardson responded positively to all items in the survey. Other candidates offered comments to explain items they left blank. For example, in response to the question concerning expanding the definition of family members under the Family and Medical Leave Act, which provides up to 12 weeks of job-protected medical or care leave for workers in larger firms, Clinton explained that her first priority was to expand coverage to individuals working in businesses with 25 or more employees, but she would then consider further expansion. Rather than supporting conversion of the Child Tax Credit for a Caregiver Credit, Clinton described a \$3,000 caregiver tax credit. Obama, in response to the question regarding full Head Start funding for all eligible children, explained that he proposes to quadruple the number of infants and toddlers participating in Early Head Start. While Edwards did not register support for Head Start expansion, he promised to help all states provide universal preschool for four-year olds.

Looking beyond the tally to differences not fully captured by survey responses, it is worth noting that Dodd's Family Leave Insurance Act, a comprehensive national plan for paid family leave, was endorsed early on by Richardson. Both Clinton and Obama propose to offer states some federal assistance to develop their own paid family leave policies. Edwards proposes a National Family Trust that would offer paid family and medical leave benefits to all workers by 2014.

Those initiatives help to explain why some of the specific policies in the survey did not garner consistent support: the candidates often have related but distinct policy plans covering much the same ground. But *in no case did a candidate oppose any policy listed*. While some items were left blank, none generated a negative response.

Some hesitation to respond was apparent on two cutting-edge issues: broadening the definition of family members under the FMLA to permit care for gay and lesbian partners, parents-in-law, adult children, siblings, and grandparents, and converting the Child Tax Credit to a Caregiver Credit covering disabled family members and dependent children. The former broadens the meaning of family in ways that might not affect large numbers of Americans, but are crucial when someone close is in need of care. The latter

highlights the care needs of adults with disabilities adults, a group that is all too often ignored in policy debates.

One thing is for certain: if even a bare majority of the policies listed in the survey became the law of the land, life would get better for the vast majority of American families.

Table 1. Survey and Response Tally, the Take Care Net Candidate Survey, 2007

(An ✓ indicates support, a blank non-support)

	Clinton	Dodd	Edwards	Obama	Richardson
<u>Education and Child Care</u>					
1. Increase funding for child care under TANF	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2. A general increase in funding for child care	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3. Increasing federal funding for after-school care	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4. Public funding for universal, voluntary pre-school programs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5. Increasing funding for early Head Start.	✓	✓		✓	✓
6. Fully funding Head Start to provide services to all eligible children	✓	✓			✓
<u>Family and Medical Leave</u>					
7. Expanding access to FMLA to employees in firms of 25 or more.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
8. Allowing leave for appointments related to domestic violence.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9. Ensuring employers provide employees a minimum number of paid sick days to care for their family member's routine illness	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
10. Allowing federal agencies to offer their employees paid parental leave	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
11. Allowing use of FMLA for routine school and medical appointments.	✓	✓		✓	✓
12. Creating a federal insurance fund to provide wage replacement during family and medical leave.	✓	✓			✓
13. Expanding the definition of family members to include gay and lesbian partners, parents-in-law, adult children, siblings, and grandparents		✓			✓

	Clinton	Dodd	Edwards	Obama	Richardson
<u>Family Caregivers</u>					
14. Supporting parity in pay and pro-rated benefits for part-time workers.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
15. Requiring states not to exclude part-time workers from eligibility for unemployment insurance	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
16. Expanding the Dependent Care Tax Credit and making it refundable		✓	✓	✓	✓
17. Prohibiting employers from asking about marital or parental status	✓	✓		✓	✓
18. Including care for a disabled family member as an allowable work activity under TANF.	✓	✓			✓
19. Converting the Child Tax Credit to a Caregiver Credit covering disabled family members and dependent children		✓			✓
<u>Paid Caregivers</u>					
20. Providing scholarships for education and training and increased compensation to attract and retain qualified child care providers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
21. Indexing the minimum wage to productivity or inflation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
22. Limiting mandatory overtime for health and safety professionals	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

	Clinton	Dodd	Edwards	Obama	Richardson
23. Creating and enforcing staffing ratios and caseload limits in nursing homes and child care centers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<u>General Work/Life Balance</u>					
24. Providing employees the right to request flexible work arrangements where it can be done as a reasonable business accommodation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
25. Promoting breastfeeding in the workplace	✓	✓		✓	✓
26. Limiting mandatory overtime FLSA covered employees	✓	✓		✓	✓
Total items supported	24	26	16	21	26