News Watch

On the Hill

Medicare Package. The Medicare trustees issued a report on June 5 indicating that Medicare Part A (payment for hospital costs) may become insolvent by 2001. The Part A trust fund lost $2.6 billion in 1995. The trustees recommended that an independent commission develop a long-term strategy. Congress passed a budget last year which limited projected increases in Medicare spending to an annual average of 6.4 percent. President Clinton vetoed that plan and insists that Congress enact his more limited proposal. An election year resolution of this issue is unlikely.

No Relief in Sight. Family tax relief continues to receive consideration on Capitol Hill, even as the presidential candidates float various tax cut plans. Congressional leaders may include the child credit in a package with welfare and Medicaid reform, or include it as part of a separate tax package. President Clinton threatens to veto any bill that contains the Republicans' proposed Medicaid reforms, but it does not appear that he will sign the tax cuts without comparable cuts in spending. Sounds like another "Catch-22" situation.

Preventing Predators. The Children's Privacy Protection and Parental Empowerment Act of 1996 was introduced by Congressman Bob Franks (R-N.J.) on May 22. The purpose of this bill is to empower parents to further protect their children from child predators. The bill would allow parents to learn what information commercial vendors have obtained about their children, where the information originated, and where it has been distributed. People who prey on children should not be able to purchase, receive, sell, or in any way handle personal information about children.

Around Town

No Federal Cradle. Many news stories on the Stand for Children rally sponsored by the Children's Defense Fund asked the same questions FRC raised at a press conference the day before the event: Is more spending on failed federal programs really helping children? Or are liberal advocacy groups just using children as props to make one last stand for big government? FRC argued that strong parents are still the best advocates for children. Society's role is to help rebuild healthy communities that strengthen the hands of those who rock the cradles.

Dues Under Duress. A new House Republican task force on labor policy has recommended legislation that would protect union members from being forced to pay dues to fund partisan politics. In the 1994 election, 40 percent of union members voted for conservative candidates while union chiefs generally backed liberals. Giving workers an option to restrict their dues to collective bargaining purposes is an obvious way to protect the integrity of representative government while protecting workers' interests — and putting hard-earned dollars back in the pockets of American workers.

Justice Denied. Some black youngsters in a Washington, D.C. suburb were almost denied the chance to see how faith and hard work can pay off in America. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas was publicly disinvited to speak at a student awards ceremony in early June when a school official threatened to disrupt the event. Although the school board ultimately voted to reinvite Thomas, the whole spectacle sent a troubling message to students, who, fortunately, ultimately got to hear Thomas's powerful message of personal virtue and equality before the law.

Across the Globe

Costly Habitat. From June 3-14 in Istanbul, Turkey, Habitat II, the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, built on the anti-family agendas of previous U.N. conferences, this time focusing on the environmental and economic challenges of rapid urbanization. Urging more efforts to implement that agenda, Clinton Secretary of State Warren Christopher called for a moratorium on further U.N. world conferences. And none too soon. A recent General Accounting Office study found that the U.S. Government spent a whopping $5.9 million on the U.N. Conference on Women held last September in Beijing, China.

Rewarding Tyranny. On June 3, President Clinton formally announced his intention to extend "most favored nation" (MFN) trade privileges to China. Unless Congress quickly opposes Clinton's stand, China will continue to enjoy low tariffs on exports to the U.S. FRC opposes extending China's MFN status not only because the U.S. runs a trade deficit of $34 billion every year with China, but especially because of China's myriad human rights abuses, such as forced abortion and sterilization policies, exploitation of prisoners as slave laborers, and systematic persecution of Christians.

Wirth Stumbles. During a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing June 4, chairman Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) put two questions to witness Timothy Wirth, Undersecretary of State for Global Affairs. Citing Hillary Clinton's speech during the U.N. Beijing conference, where she strongly denounced sex selection abortion and mandatory abortion, Helms asked Wirth if the Clinton administration would support legislation outlawing sex selection abortion in the U.S. and admitting refugees fleeing China's coercive abortion policies. Wirth could not answer either question directly, saying there were "other implications" which needed to be considered.

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Policy Update

Parental Rights Vote Near

The recent pro-big-government "Stand for Children" rally in Washington, D.C. had little in common with the growing grass-roots parental rights movement, except for its focus on children. The Family Research Council's message to rally participants was that government programs can never provide what children vitally need — parents raising them with love and direction. Which is to say, parents are irreplaceable.

With public school officials handing condoms to pre-teens, it is no wonder that the parental rights movement has captured the public's attention. Parents across the country are finding their voice against intrusive state and federal governments. At the state level, parents are supporting constitutional amendments which protect the right of parents to direct the upbringing and education of their children without unwanted government infringement. At the federal level, parents are supporting the Parental Rights and Responsibilities Act of 1996 (PRRA), which simply codifies Supreme Court rulings that parents have a fundamental right to raise their children which the government must respect.

That parents, not government, should have the primary responsibility and authority in raising their children seems beyond dispute. Yet, the ubiquitous ACLU and their education counterpart, the National Education Association, have weighed in with heavy protests. They are fond of presenting hypothetical "horror stories" of child abuse they claim the PRRA will permit, yet the bill specifically excludes abusive parents from its protection.

In contrast to these theoretical concerns, real-life instances of outrageous government violations of parents rights persist. If the PRRA were law, parents in Pennsylvania would probably not have had to file suit against the East Stroudsburg public school for forcing their sixth-grade daughters to undergo vaginal examinations without their knowledge or consent and over the tearful protestations of the girls. This flagrant usurpation of the right of parents to make health care decisions for their children would not be tolerated under the PRRA. Without it, the Pennsylvania parents have little certainty of success.

A vote on the PRRA is expected before August. Call 202-225-3121 and urge your congressman and senators to vote for the PRRA (H.R. 1946; S. 984). For information on state initiatives, contact Of the People at 703-351-5051.

Court Watch

Indecent Opinion

The District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania has ruled against provisions of the Communications Decency Act (CDA), the first major anti-pornography legislation for cyberspace. This is a sad defeat with ominous implications for the burgeoning, new "global community." The Clinton Justice Department will appeal the ruling to the Supreme Court.

The CDA was passed as part of the Telecommunications Reform bill in February 1996. It seeks to protect children from sexually explicit material on the Internet by prohibiting adults from knowingly sending or displaying "indecent material" to kids. It imposes criminal penalties for violation of the law.

The ACLU and a coalition of liberal groups and on-line service providers filed the challenge to the CDA in Philadelphia. A similar challenge was filed in New York and is still pending. The Family Research Council and the National Law Center for Children and Families submitted 400 pages of legal argument and exhibits on behalf of anti-pornography groups defending the CDA. Judge Delores Sloviter, a Carter appointee, headed the Philadelphia three-judge panel which heard testimony this spring from ACLU and government witnesses.

The CDA uses the time-tested standard of "indecency" to draw the line between material that is appropriate for adults but not for children. "Indecent material" is defined as material depicting or describing sexual or excretory activities or organs which, in context, is presented in a patently offensive manner. The Supreme Court has ruled that adults have a First Amendment right to receive indecent material and share it with other adults, but no right to foist it upon children. The indecency standard has protected children in the broadcast television, radio, and telephone media.

At closing arguments in Philadelphia, it was clear that the ACLU was not simply quarreling with this particular law, but was advocating no restrictions whatsoever on the dissemination of computer pornography to children. The Philadelphia court was openly hostile to the Justice Department and its defense of the CDA, and its ruling absurdly implies that the advancement of Internet technology depends upon unfettered exhibition of sexual material to children.

Bulletin Board

FRC commemorates Independence Day with release of *Reunion: Celebrating Family, Faith and Freedom*. Filled with stories and pictures, *Reunion* is a colorful publication for the whole family. It celebrates family reunions, Thanksgiving, and the patriotic holidays. Veterans' memoirs, submitted by our readers, and immigrants' stories are reminders of the blessings — and price — of freedom. See enclosed coupon to order. Suggested donation $4.

- **Gary Bauer Speaks**

June 20-Addresses Christian Home Educators in Denver, Colo.

July 11-Addresses Successful Living meeting in Baltimore, Md.

July 23-Addresses the Ancient Order of Hibernians national convention in St. Paul, Minn.

July-Testifies on the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) before the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee

- **FRC on Air**

May 31-FRC joined other groups in hosting a news conference at the National Press Club to oppose the June 1 "Stand for Children" rally. The news conference was widely covered, including C-SPAN, which re-aired the press conference several times that day.

June 7-Bauer appears on CNN's "Inside Politics" discussing Senator Bob Dole's opposition to abortion and the debate over the abortion plank in the GOP platform.

FRC in Action

June 10–13-Policy Analyst Robert Maginnis participated in an international conference in Sweden sponsored by the Swedish National Institute of Public Health, the Hassela Nordic Network, and European Cities Against Drugs. Participants discussed drug research, prevention, treatment, organized crime, and money laundering.

June 20-Policy Analyst Gracie Hsu addresses Washington Health Policy Fellowship Program students from, the American Medical Student Association in Washington, D.C.

June 22-Vice President for Policy William R. Mattox, Jr. speaks at the American Public Philosophy Institute conference on "The Family, Civil Society, and the State" at the Sheraton City Centre Hotel in Washington, D.C. Mr. Mattox's topic will be, "Government Tax Policy and the Family."