

Generations United
Public Policy Agenda
for the 110th
Congress



Generations United

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Generations United

*Public Policy Agenda
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Letter from the Chair and Executive Director

We are proud to present Generations United's Public Policy Agenda for the 110th Congress. This agenda is the result of a thoughtful development process by the Generations United Public Policy Committee, Board of Directors and staff.

Generations United (GU) is the national membership organization focused solely on improving the lives of children, youth, and older people through intergenerational strategies, programs, and public policies. Since our inception in 1986, Generations United has served as a non-partisan resource for educating policymakers and the public about the economic, social, and personal imperatives of the intergenerational cooperation.

To determine our priorities, GU uses an intergenerational lens. While we support a wide range of policies, we strive to identify a very short list of top priorities. Generations United works carefully to limit our focus to those areas that are distinctly intergenerational, timely and/or are in need of clear leadership.

GU has had made significant accomplishments in recent years. The LEGACY Intergenerational Housing bill to help grandparents raising grandchildren was funded with four million dollars. Our leadership led to the inclusion of grandparents and other relatives in the National Family Caregiver Support Program, and in 2006 to the reduction of the qualifying age, expanding eligibility to thousands of new families. The reauthorized Older Americans Act of 2006 also now includes intergenerational civic engagement. Still there is much to be done.

We would like to commend last year's co-chairs of the Public Policy Committee, Paul N.D. Thornell, then with United Way of America, and Howard Bedlin, Vice President for Public Policy and Advocacy with the National Council on Aging. They provided tremendous leadership in the creation of an agenda that represents the mutual concerns of young and old and promotes innovative intergenerational approaches.

In addition we would like to thank the committee members who worked diligently to develop the priorities and language presented in the agenda. And finally, thank you to the GU staff, in particular Jaia Peterson Lent and Vicki Bolton in the Policy Department, who continue to provide ongoing support to the committee and leadership for furthering the objectives of the agenda.

Generations United will use this public policy document as a basis for strong educational and advocacy efforts to promote intergenerational public policy and create a world that values all generations.



John Rother



Donna M. Butts

Introduction to Generations United

Mission:

To improve the lives of children, youth, and older people through intergenerational collaboration, public policies, and programs for the enduring benefit of all.

Generations United (GU) is the national membership organization focused solely on improving the lives of children, youth, and older people through intergenerational strategies, programs, and public policies. GU represents more than 100 national, state, and local organizations and individuals representing more than 70 million Americans. Since 1986 GU has served as a resource for educating policy-makers and the public about the economic, social, and personal imperatives of intergenerational cooperation. GU acts as a catalyst for stimulating collaboration between aging, children, and youth organizations, providing a forum to explore areas of common ground while celebrating the richness of each generation.

Our Mission:

To improve the lives of children, youth, and older people through intergenerational collaboration, public policies, and programs for the enduring benefit of all.

Our Vision:

A world that values and engages all generations.

Our Role:

To act as a catalyst that fosters innovation in programs and policies that grow and lead the intergenerational field.

Core Beliefs:

Generations United is the catalyst that brings single-age focused groups together to build and support a common agenda while providing a unique voice in public debate. Generations United honors all ages, supports all ages, and engages all ages. Further, we believe:

- Intergenerational collaboration unites and improves our communities
- Intergenerational approaches have a positive relationship to economic growth and value creation
- Public policy should meet the needs of all generations
- Resources are more wisely used when they connect the generations rather than separate them
- Discrimination, in any form, limits a person's potential to contribute to the development of their community
- Grandparents and other adults who step forward to raise children are keeping families together and providing an economic service to our country.

Legislative Action Priorities during the 110th Congress

Leadership

These first tier priorities are those on which Generations United will take a leadership role. Issues in this category will get the highest possible attention from GU whenever appropriate and feasible. We will advocate for these priorities before Congress and the Administration, organize and participate in Hill visits and other public education activities, initiate sign-on letters and host briefings. GU's leadership priorities are:

- To pass the Kinship Caregivers Support Act, specifically those provisions that call for the use of federal funds for subsidized guardianship programs for kinship caregivers, the development of kinship navigator programs, allowing states to establish separate licensing for relative foster parents, and the requirement that child welfare agencies notify relatives of children who enter foster care.
- To fund the multigenerational and civic engagement activities authorized under the Older Americans Act at a level which reflects the importance of these programs to both the individuals receiving support, and society as a whole.

Partnership

These are areas in which Generations United will partner with other organizations to achieve our goals, but will not take a leadership role. As resources permit, we will advocate before Congress and the Administration, co-sponsor briefings and sign-on letters, monitor legislation and inform members. GU's partnership priorities are:

- Restore funding for the Social Services Block Grant to its full level at \$2.8 billion.
- Improve State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) to better serve vulnerable children, including proper funding for outreach and enrollment.
- Include a strong nutrition title in the reauthorization of the farm bill that maintains the food stamp program's entitlement status, increases the food stamp budget and enhances the nutritional education, outreach, and enrollment components of the food stamp program.
- Expand and improve respite care services for grandparent and other relative caregivers, for example through funding the Lifespan Respite Care Act.
- Improve access, especially for low-income working families, to quality child care, Head Start and Early Head Start programs, as well as quality early childhood programs such as voluntary universal birth to school-age early education and care programs.

Support

GU stands by the remaining issues outlined in this Public Policy Agenda, and will sign-on to letters and attend meetings on these subjects where appropriate.

Generations United Public Policy Committee Statement

Generations United promotes an intergenerational approach to framing public policies that impact child, youth and older adult issues. While popular perception suggests that advocates of these respective interest groups are at odds over policy, we contend otherwise. The intergenerational inequity view argues that relationships between young and old are based on competition for scarce resources, which fosters conflict among the generations. We hope to move the public's understanding of these issues beyond this narrow perspective. Our goal is for all to understand that generational interdependence, or the mutual giving and receiving of resources over time, is crucial to promoting social progress. Intergenerational transfers have been integral to all societies throughout time and should be supported by public policy that protects and encourages their perpetuation.

Generations United is the organization that brings single-age focused groups together to promote a common agenda. Our coming together is based on the belief that the dignity of young and old requires recognition and expectation of ongoing contributions to home and community. We believe that public policy should meet the needs of all generations and that resources are more wisely used when they connect generations rather than separate them. We share the concern for justice among all persons and groups in society. We think justice is ill served by scapegoating young people, older people, the poor, or other groups. We further believe that sound public policy cannot be based on demeaning caricatures or stereotypes of the generations.

Children and the elderly benefit from investments that lead to a stronger economy. Improved schools result in a more capable and productive work force, one that is better able to support those who are not working due to youth, disability, or retirement.

Quality health care is particularly important for older adults and children, and preventive care is a vital investment in the future. A sound Social Security program enables middle-aged parents to focus more of their resources on their children, knowing that their own parents' retirements are secure. We seek to build on the common concerns of all for educational and employment opportunities, access to comprehensive health and mental health care, a sound economy, and economic security in good times and bad.

Effective programs require adequate, sustained revenues to ensure quality provision over time. Generations United supports full funding for the programs and policies described in this agenda. Critical (or critically important) human service programs such as Medicaid, federal foster care, child protection, Head Start, and housing programs must be maintained to ensure continued access by eligible populations. Further, the level and quality of services should be continually monitored for possible improvements that will enhance outcomes for vulnerable children, families and other adults.

Since 1986, Generations United has been the only national membership organization in the country focused solely on improving the lives of young and old alike by promoting intergenerational strategies, programs, and public policies. Our constituency includes over 100 national organizations, numerous state and local coalitions, and diverse individuals. Currently, more than 20 organizations representing those that serve younger and older constituencies and several interested individuals serve on the Generations United Public Policy Committee under the leadership of: Paul N.D. Thornell, then with United Way of America; and Howard Bedlin, Vice President for Public Policy and Advocacy with the National Council on Aging.

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About the Generations United Public Policy Agenda

What issues are included in this agenda?

Generations United supports a wide range of policies that are consistent with the intergenerational approach. While this agenda was created to represent current key intergenerational issues of concern to GU members, additional issues may arise over time.

How does GU determine if something is an intergenerational public policy issue?

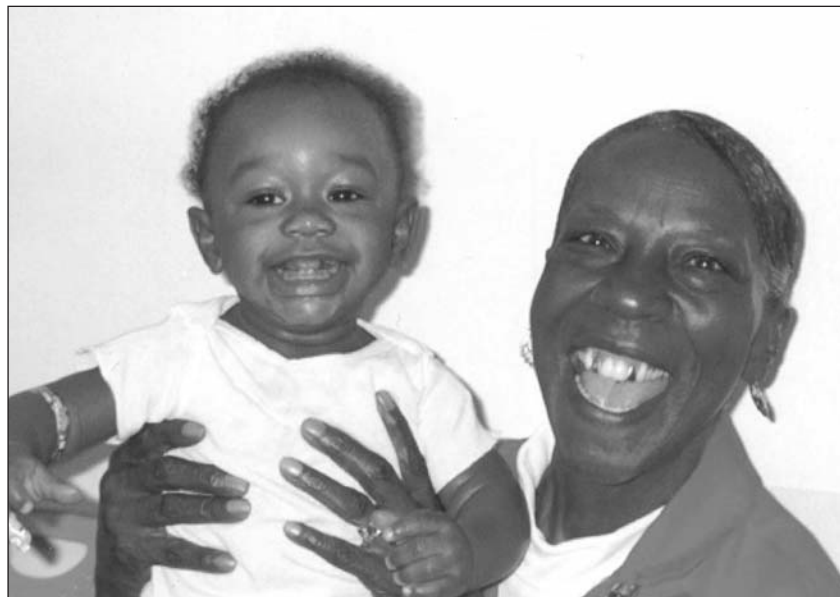
GU recognizes a public policy issue as intergenerational when it either:

- Incorporates an intergenerational approach to addressing an issue, or
- Has an impact across the generations.

How does GU determine if a public policy is sensitive to all generations?

The goal of this Generations United agenda is to promote public policies that use an intergenerational approach and shape other key policies to be supportive of intergenerational reciprocity. Public policies are intergenerational when they receive a positive response to questions such as:

- Are people of all ages being viewed as a resource?
- Does the policy promote the interdependence of the generations?
- Is the policy sensitive to intergenerational family structures, e.g., grandparents who are raising grandchildren?
- Does the policy encourage intergenerational transfers through shared care or services?



Billie Wright