



NATIONAL CHILDREN'S STUDY

Congressional Briefing: April 28, 2004

Brief description:

The National Children's Study (NCS) will examine the effects of environmental influences on the health and development of more than 100,000 children across the United States, following them from before birth until age 21. **The goal of the study is to improve the health and well-being of children.**

Recommendation:

Congress should approve **\$27 million to \$50 million in 2005 to ramp up the NCS**, in addition to the \$12 million already allocated by federal agencies. These funds would in part be used to hire a laboratory large enough to store more than two billion anticipated biological and environmental samples—from participants' blood and DNA to dust from their houses, soil from their yards and air from their neighborhoods.

Justification:

- Rates of **asthma, learning and developmental disabilities, certain birth defects and childhood cancers are on the rise**, and based on emerging scientific studies, environmental factors, some in conjunction with genetic factors, likely play a key role.
- The **NCS would provide essential data** identifying toxins and other environmental exposures that need to be removed from our environment to ensure children reach their full potential.
- Studying 100,000 children from fetal development to age 21 **will significantly increase understanding of how the environment can affect health** just as the longitudinal Framingham Heart Disease Study augmented our understanding of how to more effectively address heart disease.
- The study will also **allow scientists to find the differences that exist between groups of people**, in terms of their health, health care access, disease occurrence, and other issues, so that these differences or disparities can be addressed.
- **NCS would help save not only lives and the quality of life for thousands, it would save money.** For example, when lead was removed from gasoline and paint, billions of dollars were saved in terms of health care costs and lost income, according to the Centers for Disease Control. By removing other environmental toxins, we could experience significant cost savings as a society.
- Overall, NCS will be one of the **richest information resources available for answering questions related to children's health and development** and will form the basis of child health guidance, interventions, and policy for generations to come.