

For Immediate Release

February 9, 2006

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New TABOR Not Any Better for Wisconsin Kids and Families

“They’ve taken the same bad ideas from their earlier TABOR proposals and simply given them a new name,” stated John Keckhaver, research analyst at the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families, responding to today’s introduction of the Taxpayer Protection Amendment. “This proposal contains the same three primary problems as earlier TABOR proposals:”

1. It’s in the constitution: making it impossible to fine-tune and adapt to changing needs and priorities.

Constitutions have historically been for enumerating individual liberties, not for setting fiscal policy or limiting the authority of democratically elected officials.

2. The formula is still highly flawed: it uses the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and general population growth as the measures for allowable growth.

The CPI is a good measure of what is happening to the costs of things individuals pay for (clothes, food, transportation, etc.), but not of what governments pay for (health care, energy), the costs of which have historically risen faster than the CPI.

The general population is not a good measure because sub-groups like the elderly – who utilize long term care and prescription drug benefit programs, for instance – are growing much more rapidly than the general population, and will continue to put stress on our current health care system. (For example, the senior population nationwide is expected to grow at twice the rate of the non-senior population over the next 20 years.)

3. The only way to correct unintended consequences caused by the flawed formula is through a costly, time-consuming referenda.

Referenda have become political tools, with large amounts of money being spent on campaign-type activities, often by out-of-state groups that have been unable to influence the more direct legislative process.

“Ironically, this new TABOR proposal comes at a time when jobs are being created in Wisconsin and our economic performance is quite strong, especially compared to neighboring states,” added Charity Eleson, WCCF Executive Director. “The TP Amendment won’t do anything to help solve the real issues that families and businesses alike are facing around the state,” she added, “like health care costs and access, and significant workforce development needs.”

WCCF will be wrapping up a series of 6 community forums on TABOR and related proposals next Wednesday in Green Bay.

The Wisconsin Council on Children and Families is a statewide, non-partisan, non-profit organization that works to improve the lives of Wisconsin’s children and families. WCCF: Raising voices to make every kid count.