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The Fight Over
Orphanages
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Final Copy

Welfare: Let's move to a discussion of what is best
for the children that is open, honest and fair

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BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

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I also understand the frustration that many Americans feel toward government bureaucracy. As a children's advocate and

lawyer, I waged plenty of my own battles with government, and represented foster children and parents in lawsuits against government bureaucracies. On a more personal level, I have struggled with the anguish caused by terminating the parental

rights of mothers who desperately love their children but are unable to care for them. And I have had to explain to abused children, who fear loneliness more than harm, that being taken from the only home they know is for their protection and not their punishment.

Based on these experiences, I know that when any of us talk about what is best for children, we should start with a large dose of humility, and then be willing to struggle through the hard questions posed by the collapse of families.

Take the orphanages debate, for example. There is no doubt that many Americans have benefited from being raised by caring people in orphanages. On the other hand, I disagree with those who

suggest that children should be taken from their parents and put in orphanages solely because they were born out of wedlock and their parents are poor. This is big government interference into the lives of private citizens at its worst.

As we debate welfare reform, I hope we will learn from the recent verbal skirmishes over orphanages how public discussion of critical issues can be confused and bogged down by polarizing language. I agree with the recent comments of Speaker Gingrich, who said last week that the debate over orphanages had become distorted and cheap. Let's move on to a discussion that is open, honest and fair. If we do, perhaps we will be able to look back at the orphanage debate as a cautionary lesson in how to discuss sensitive and important matters, and not to characterize whole groups of Americans with broad, unfair

stereotypes that will not lead us to positive or fair solutions.

Like most Americans, I too am deeply disturbed by the outrageous rates of out-of-wedlock births and the welfare dependency they bring. And my heart breaks every time I hear another story about a mother or father who abuses, neglects or kills a child.

But more than two decades of working on children's issues has taught me that there are no simple solutions to such complex human problems. I also have learned that there are some absolutely bedrock principles when it comes to ensuring the well-being of children.

First, children are almost always best off with their families. Our legal system presumes that a child should be with his or her parents unless there is convincing evidence that abuse or neglect threatens a child's well-being. That standard should not be changed. But we should look for better ways to identify children at risk, move quickly to help their families and, as a last resort, move children to the best possible out-of-home placement.

Second, those who believe poverty is a disqualification from good parenting probably have not been in the company of poor but hardworking parents. Both the President and the Speaker lost their fathers, one through death, one through divorce. Each of their young mothers eventually remarried, and each boy was then adopted by his new father. But one can only imagine what might have

happened if bad luck had left those young women alone and in poverty. I doubt either mom would have given up Bill or Newt to any orphanage without one heck of a fight.

Poor parents struggle every day to give their children the most with the least. And often they are among the best parents. They know children need a secure home, strong values, consistency and love.

The love can be as rich and the values as sound in the homes of Watts as in Westchester, in Harlem as in Highland Park.

Those who think otherwise are letting a handful of sensational media stories create a false stereotype in their minds. After all, only a small fraction of the 14 million children classified as poor currently are placed in out-of-home care.

Third, it is important to support families with special problems, including poverty, before giving up on them. Certainly there are cases--too many, and tragically there seem to be more all the time--where parents abuse their children or are unable or unwilling to meet their family responsibilities. Instances of abuse and neglect occur in rich as well as poor families. But we all know that poor families are more likely to feel the stress of economic troubles and be identified for government intervention. It is more cost-effective and realistic to help avoid family break-up. That is why the President signed the Family and Medical Leave Act, which enables parents to be good parents and good workers by giving them time off without fear of losing their job when a child is born or is sick.

The President also insisted in 1993 on giving working families earning less than \$26,000 a year a tax cut that averaged \$1,000 a family, so that their hard-earned dollars could be spent on their children instead of sent to the government.

The President's budget plan also included funding for family preservation programs like the one I recently visited in Los Angeles. That church-run program receives state and federal funds to help families stay together. The success stories I heard were impressive, and so was the fact that the work being done was cheaper than any foster care or orphanage could ever be.

Fourth, whenever dangerous circumstances do exist, children must be protected from harm and moved into al-

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When children are indan-Hgered and only the government has the right to intervene, government must act quickly and decisively to protect them. But removing children from their parents is—and should be—difficult because of the seriousness of the matter, and because available options outside the family are not always good ones. Too often, children are left to languish in the insecurity of the foster care system or with inadequate institutional care. When the govern-

ment is forced to remove a child, it should be required to find the right solution promptly.

The point I have tried to make for years is that any decision to separate a child from his parents should be made solely on the basis of the child's safety and well-being. We should never permit children to be taken from their families simply because the parents are poor, unmarried or lacking education.

So let's put first things first. Our greatest energy should be spent promoting responsible parenting and independence from the welfare system—all with a view toward building strong families and creating conditions in which children can flourish. Children's welfare should always be the

underlying principle in welfare reform. It is the crux of welfare reform legislation the President presented to Congress last year. And it is what the President was working for when he gave 24 states waivers to promote their own versions of welfare reform.

In the coming debate, I hope we can all agree to launch a national campaign to discourage teenage pregnancies and to require fathers to take responsibility for their children and pay child support when marriage doesn't occur or divorce does. We should insist that young men who casually father children admit paternity. We should help young women on welfare who are yearning to be good mothers acquire the skills they need to move out of welfare and into work. We should encourage the adoption of children who cannot be returned to their parents. We should insist that any institution we establish for children meet

standards of care and safety that we would demand for our own children.

I grew up in a Republican family and, although I'm now a Democrat, I always thought the Republican Party believed in the value of family--not in government intrusions into family life. It is my hope that we can now put the war of words about orphanages and the slogans about welfare families behind us and join together--as parents, teachers, ministers, community leaders and policymakers--to fulfill our responsibilities to America's children. Too often in the past, we've assumed that only the family, or only the government, was responsible for ensuring the well-being of children. But personal values and national policies must both play a role.

As the National Conference of Catholic Bishops said in its 1992 pastoral letter entitled, Putting Families First: ``No government can love a child, and no policy can substitute for a family's care. But, government can either support or undermine families. There has been an unfortunate, unnecessary and unreal polarization in discussion [about] how best to help families. The undeniable fact is that our children's future is shaped both by the values of their parents and the policies of our nation.''

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To: National Editors and Producers

Contact: Brad Stone
at 212/445-4862

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Sunday, January 8, 1995

FIRST LADY RESPONDS TO NEWT GINGRICH ON ORPHANAGE DEBATE

EXCLUSIVE GUEST ESSAY BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

New York -- In "The Fight Over Orphanages," a piece written by Hillary Rodham Clinton in the latest issue of Newsweek, the First Lady offers a detailed response to Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich's recent comments on orphanages.

Last month, Mrs. Clinton dismissed as "absurd" the idea of taking children away from their homes solely because they are poor and putting them into orphanages. Gingrich responded by suggesting that Mrs. Clinton rent the 1938 movie "Boy's Town," adding, "I don't understand liberals who live in enclaves of safety who say 'Oh, this would be a terrible thing.'" Newsweek asked Mrs. Clinton for her response. It appears in the January 16, 1995 issue (on newsstands Monday, January 9).

(text attached)

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ROB NELSON-BLACK STAR

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Promoting Father Flanagan: Gingrich autographs
a photo from 'Boys' Town' at a Georgia screening

Caption

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LARRY DOWNING-NEWSWEEK

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The First Lady: 'I doubt either mom would have
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Caption

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`Children
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FINAL midnight 1/6/95

HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
NEWSWEEK MAGAZINE -- DRAFT

JANUARY 6, 1995

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Over the past 25 years I have spent a lot of time and energy working to strengthen families and help children. There is nothing about which I care more. I have volunteered in institutions serving children in homeless shelters, group homes, children's hospitals and schools. In Arkansas, I started programs to teach parenting skills to welfare recipients and worked with advocacy groups to improve education, health care and child care. I have served on committees to combat youth violence and child abuse. And I have written about the legal rights and responsibilities of children in their families and society.

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When any of us talk about what is best for children, we should start with a large dose of humility, and then be willing to struggle through the hard questions posed by the collapse of families. I am heartened that the well-being of children increasingly is a focus of attention as Americans face up to their own frustrations at the individuals and systems failing children and confront the challenges to society from children, particularly poor ones, who fall victim to neglectful parenting,

Enable ppl to be for what's good
Parents when a child
I know who the parent is & who the child is

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I know who the parent is & who the child is
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Hillary,

Here is a new draft with the minor revisions we discussed. There is a possibility that Newsweek still will have to cut a 100 words or so. They will discuss all cuts with me when they're finalized in the morning, and I'll be happy to review them with you if you want to spend time doing that.

I'm told the Connie Chung-Mrs. Gingrich exchange is only referred to in the magazine's main political piece that recaps what happened this week in Congress. The editors have not yet finalized the teaser on the cover, nor the headlines, so I have no intelligence on those fronts.

I'll take another good look at the whole piece in the morning when I'm a little more coherent just to make sure everything flows as we hoped.

Lissa

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Lissa', with a stylized flourish.

FAX TRANSMITTAL
LISSA MUSCATINE
202-337-3171

DATE: 1/7/95

TO: MRS. CLINTON c/o USHER'S OFFICE

FROM: LISSA MUSCATINE

RECEIVER PHONE: 202 456 - 2650

RECEIVER FAX: 202 456 - 6255

NUMBER OF PAGES INCLUDING COVER: 9

COMMENTS: Please deliver to

Mrs Clinton first thing Saturday

morning! Thanks!

responsibilities. Instances of abuse and neglect occur in families across the socio-economic spectrum, from rich to poor.

Whenever such dangerous circumstances exist, children must be protected from harm and moved into alternative settings outside their family. But this should result only as a last resort to keep the child safe.

Sadly, even when we do our utmost to build and sustain strong families, some families fail, and some parents harm their children. Every day we read stories about parents who abandon their children in dumpsters, subject them to physical abuse or, as happened so tragically in South Carolina recently, drown them in a lake.

In cases such as these, how can we not intervene quickly and decisively to protect the children? These situations demand not only that we act, but that we find the right solution for the individual child, because not even abused and neglected children, much less poor children, come from cookie-cutters.

Our nation has made great progress on behalf of children in this century, from enacting child labor laws in the early years to family and medical leave last year. But even with that progress and our genuine concern for children, too many American youngsters today are exhibiting signs of distress at earlier ages as their families fail them and institutions that once supported and nourished family life have frayed. As parents struggle to balance the demands of work and family -- and in some cases to provide basic necessities of food and shelter -- the family as an

HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
NEWSWEEK MAGAZINE -- DRAFT
JANUARY 6, 1994

I am heartened that the well-being of children and families increasingly is a focus of national attention as more and more Americans express their frustration with the failings of the welfare system, high rates of illegitimacy, irresponsible parenting, poor schooling, drugs, and violence. And I applaud our nation's determination to do something about these problems.

Over the past 25 years I have spent a lot of time and energy working to strengthen families and help children. There is nothing about which I care more. I have volunteered in institutions serving children in homeless shelters, group homes, children's hospitals and schools. In Arkansas, I started programs to teach parenting skills to welfare recipients and worked with advocacy groups ~~like the Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families and the Children's Defense Fund~~ to improve education, health care and child care. I have served on committees to combat youth violence and child abuse. And I have written about the legal rights and responsibilities of children in their families and society.

I also understand the frustration that many Americans feel toward government bureaucracy. As a children's advocate and lawyer, I waged plenty of my own battles with government, and represented foster children and parents in lawsuits against government bureaucracies. On a more personal level, I have

struggled with the anguish caused by terminating the parental rights of mothers who desperately love their children but are unable to care for them. And I have had to explain to abused children, who fear loneliness more than harm, that being taken from the only home they know is for their protection and not their punishment.

Based on these experiences, I know that when any of us talk about what is best for children, we should start with a large dose of humility, and then be willing to struggle through the hard questions posed by the collapse of families.

Take the orphanages debate, for example. There is no doubt that many Americans have benefited from being raised by caring people in orphanages. On the other hand, I disagree with those who suggest that children should be taken from their parents and put in orphanages solely because they were born out of wedlock and their parents are poor. This is big government interference into the lives of private citizens at its worst.

As we debate welfare reform, I hope we will learn from the recent verbal skirmishes over orphanages how public discussion of critical issues can be confused and bogged down by polarizing language. I agree with the recent comments of Speaker Gingrich, who said last week that the debate over orphanages had become distorted and cheap. Let's move on to a discussion that is open, honest, and fair. →

Like most Americans, I, too, am deeply disturbed by the outrageous rates of out-of-wedlock births and the welfare

dependency they bring. [And my heart breaks every time I hear another story about a mother or father who abuses, neglects, or kills a child.]

4 If we succeed this year in reforming welfare to make a better future for millions of America's children, perhaps we will be able to look back at the orphanage debate as a cautionary lesson in how to discuss sensitive and important matters, and not to characterize whole groups of Americans with broad, unfair stereotypes that will not lead us to positive or fair solutions.

But More than two decades of working on children's issues has taught me that there are no simple solutions. But I have also learned that there are some absolutely bedrock principles.

First, children are almost always best off with their families. Our legal system presumes that a child should be with his or her parents unless there is convincing evidence that abuse or neglect threatens a child's well-being. That standard should not be changed. But we should look for better ways to identify children at risk, move quickly to help their families and, as a last resort, move children to the best possible out-of-home placement.

Second, those who believe poverty is a disqualification from good parenting probably have not been in the company of poor but hardworking parents. Both the President and the Speaker lost their fathers, one through death, one through divorce. Each of their young mothers eventually remarried, and each boy was then adopted by his new father. But one can only imagine what might

have happened if bad luck had left those young women alone and in poverty. I doubt either mom would have given up Bill or Newt to any orphanage without one heck of a fight.

Poor parents struggle every day to give their children the most with the least. And often they are among the best parents. They know children need a secure home, strong values, consistency and love. The love is as rich and the values as sound in the homes of Watts as in Westchester, in Harlem as in Highland Park.

Those who think otherwise are letting a handful of sensational media stories create a false stereotype in their minds. After all, only a small fraction of the 14 million children classified as poor currently are placed in out-of-home care.

Third, it is important to support families with special problems, including poverty, before giving up on them. Certainly there are cases -- too many, and tragically there seem to be more all the time -- where parents abuse their children or are unable or unwilling to meet their family responsibilities. Instances of abuse and neglect occur in rich as well as poor families. But we all know that poor families are more likely to feel the stress of economic troubles and be identified for government intervention. It is more cost-effective and realistic to help avoid family breakup. That is why the President signed the Family and Medical Leave Act, which enables parents to be good parents and good workers by giving them time off without fear of losing their job when a child is born or is sick.

The President also insisted in 1993 on giving working families earning less than \$27,000 [ck -- might be \$26,000] a year a tax cut that averaged \$1,000 a family last year so that their hard-earned dollars could be spent on their children instead of sent to the government.

The President's budget plan also included funding for family preservation programs like the one I recently visited in Los Angeles. That church-run program receives state and federal funds to help families stay together. The success stories I heard were impressive, and so was the fact that the work being done was cheaper than any foster care or orphanage could ever be.

Fourth, whenever dangerous circumstances do exist, children must be protected from harm and moved into alternative settings outside their family. But this should only occur as a last resort to keep the child safe.

When children are endangered and only the government has the right to intervene, government must act quickly and decisively to protect the children, action easier said than done. Removing children from their parents is -- and should be -- difficult because of the seriousness of the matter and because available options outside the family are not always good ones. Too often, children are left to languish in the insecurity of the foster care system or with inadequate institutional care. When the government is forced to remove a child it should be required to find the right solution promptly.

The point I have tried to make for many years is that any decision to separate a child from his parents should be made solely on the basis of the child's safety and well-being. We should never permit children to be taken from their families simply because the parents are poor, unmarried, or lacking education.

So let's put first things first. Our greatest energy should be spent promoting responsible parenting and independence from the welfare system -- all with a view toward building strong families and creating conditions in which children can flourish. Children's welfare should always be the underlying principle in welfare reform. It is the crux of welfare reform legislation the President presented to Congress last year. And it is what the President was working for when he gave 24 states waivers to promote their own versions of welfare reform.

require
In the coming debate, I hope we can all agree that we should ~~provide incentives~~ ^{for} fathers to take responsibility for their children and pay child support when marriage doesn't occur or divorce does. We should insist that young men who casually father children admit paternity. We should help young women on welfare who are yearning to be good mothers acquire the skills they need to move out of welfare and into work. We should encourage the adoption of children who cannot be returned to their parents. We should insist that any institution we establish for children meet standards of care and safety that we would demand for our own children.

all agree to have a campaign to discourage
We should do all we can dissuade
been pregnant + when out of wedlock
has
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I grew up in a Republican family and, although I'm now a Democrat, I always thought the Republican Party believed in the value of family -- not in government intrusions into family life. It is my hope that we can now put the war of words about orphanages and the slogans about welfare families behind us and join together -- as parents, teachers, ministers, community leaders, and policymakers -- to fulfill our responsibilities to America's children.

Too often in the past, we've assumed that only families, or only government, were responsible for ensuring the well-being of children. But personal values and national policies must both play a role.

As the National Conference of Catholic Bishops said in their 1992 pastoral letter entitled, *Putting Families First*:

"No government can love a child, and no policy can substitute for a family's care. But, government can either support or undermine families. There has been an unfortunate, unnecessary and unreal polarization in discussion [about] how best to help families. The undeniable fact is that our children's future is shaped both by the values of their parents and the policies of our nation."

I have a feeling if Father Flanagan were here to take part in this debate, his view would reflect the wisdom of the bishops. Taking responsibility for the children in our own lives and all our children is the most sacred duty ~~in our lives~~ ^{we have}.

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I am heartened that the well-being of children and families increasingly is a focus of national attention as more and more Americans ^{express their} ~~experience~~ frustration with the failings of the welfare system, high rates of illegitimacy, irresponsible parenting, poor schooling, drugs, and violence. And I applaud our nation's determination to do something about these problems.

Over the past 25 years I have spent a lot of time and energy working to strengthen families and help children. There is nothing about which I care more. I have volunteered in institutions serving children from homeless shelters to group homes to children's hospitals and schools. In Arkansas, I started programs to teach parenting skills to welfare recipients and worked with advocacy groups like the Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families and the Children's Defense Fund to improve education, health care and child care. I have served on committees to combat youth violence and child abuse. And I have written about the legal rights and responsibilities of children in their families and society.

I also understand the frustration that many Americans feel toward government bureaucracy. As a children's advocate and lawyer, I waged plenty of my own battles with government, and represented foster children and parents in lawsuits against government bureaucracies. ^{On a more personal level,} I have ~~personally~~ struggled with the anguish caused by terminating the parental rights of mothers who desperately want their children but are unable to care for them. And I have had to explain to abused children, who fear loneliness

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Take the orphanage debate, for example. There is no doubt that many Americans have benefited from being raised by caring people in orphanages. On the other hand, I disagree with those who suggest that children should be taken from their parents and put in orphanages solely because they were born out of wedlock ^{and} ~~or~~ their parents are poor. This is big government interference into the lives of private citizens at its worst.

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~~able to look back at the orphanage debate as a cautionary lesson in how to discuss sensitive and important matters, and not to characterize whole groups of Americans with broad, unfair stereotypes that will not lead us to positive or fair solutions.~~

^{Ucr} More than two decades of working on children's issues has taught me that there are no simple solutions. ~~Like most parents, my husband and I have learned that what often seems easy in theory turns out to be more complicated in real life.~~ But I have also learned that there are some absolutely bedrock principles.

First, children are almost always best off with their families. Our legal system presumes that a child should be with his or her parents unless there is convincing evidence that abuse or neglect threatens a child's well-being. That standard should not be changed. But we should look for better ways to identify children at risk, move quickly to help their families and, as a last resort, move children to the best possible out-of-home placement.

Second, those who believe poverty is a disqualification from good parenting probably have not been in the company of poor but hardworking parents. Both the President and The Speaker lost their fathers, one through death, one through divorce. Each of their young mothers eventually remarried, and each boy was then adopted by his new father. But one can only imagine what might have happened if bad luck had left those young women alone and in poverty. I doubt that either mom would have given up Bill or Newt to any orphanage without one heck of a fight.

Poor parents struggle every day to give their children the most with the least. And often they are among the best parents. Those who think otherwise are letting a handful of sensational media stories create a false stereotype in their minds. Only one-half million of the 15 million children classified as poor currently are placed in out-of-home care [ck numbers]. ~~At the turn of the century, this sort of prejudice was focused on the new immigrants in America. Now, many of those immigrant families stand out as our ideal of the American Dream realized.~~

Third, it is important to support families with special problems, including poverty, before giving up on them.

Certainly there are cases -- too many, and tragically there seem to be more all the time -- where parents abuse their children or are unable or unwilling to meet their family responsibilities. Instances of abuse and neglect occur in rich as well as poor families. But we all know that poor families are more likely feel the stress of economic troubles and be identified for government intervention. It is more cost-effective and realistic to help avoid family breakup. That is why the President signed the Family and Medical Leave Act, which enables parents to be good parents and good workers by giving them time off without fear of losing their job when a child is born or is sick.

The President also insisted on giving working families earning less than \$27,000 a year a tax cut that averaged \$1,000 a

family last year so that their hard-earned dollars can be spent on their children and not government.

The President's budget plan^{also} included funding for family preservation programs like the one I recently visited in Los Angeles. That church-run program receives state and federal funds to help families stay together. The success stories I heard were impressive, and so was the fact that the work being done was cheaper than any foster care or orphanage could ever be.

Fourth, whenever dangerous circumstances do exist, children must be protected from harm and moved into alternative settings outside their family. But this should only occur as a last resort to keep the child safe.

When children are endangered and only the government has the right to intervene, government must act quickly and decisively to protect the children, action often easier said than done.

Removing children from their parents is -- and should be -- difficult because of the seriousness of the matter and the

difficulty of justifying what happens to children once they are removed.^{The system} Children are left to languish in the insecurity of the foster care system or left to inadequate institutional care.

When the government is forced to remove a child it should be required to find the right solution for that child^{promptly} ~~because not even abused and neglected children, much less poor children, come from cookie-cutters.~~

The point I have tried to make for many years is that any decision to separate a child from his parents should be made^{solely} ~~on~~

the basis of the child's safety and well-being. ~~But~~ ^{We} should never permit children to be taken from their families simply because the parents are poor, unmarried, or lacking education.

So let's put first things first. Our greatest energy should be spent promoting marriage, responsible parenting, and independence from the welfare system -- all with a view toward building strong families and creating conditions in which children can flourish. That's what welfare reform legislation the President presented to Congress last year does. That's what the President ^{will} working for when he gave 24 states waivers to promote their own versions of welfare reform.

In the coming debate, I hope we can all agree that we should provide incentives for fathers to take responsibility for their children and pay child support when marriage doesn't occur or divorce does. We should insist that young men who casually father children take responsibility and help young women on welfare learn to be good mothers [does this suggest all welfare mothers don't know how to be good mothers?] and move out of welfare and into work. We should encourage the adoption of children who cannot be returned to their parents. We should insist that any institution we establish for children passes what I call the "Chelsea" test: If, God forbid, my daughter were taken away and put in a group home, foster care, or even an orphanage, would I want her to be there?

I grew up in a Republican family and, although I'm now a Democrat, I always thought the Republican Party believed in the

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~~individual and collective~~ ^{and the way we argue about welfare families} responsibilities to America's children.

As the National Conference of Catholic Bishops said in their 1992 pastoral letter entitled, *Putting Families First*:

"No government can love a child, and no policy can substitute for a family's care. But, government can either support or undermine families. There has been an unfortunate, unnecessary and unreal polarization in discussion [about] how best to help families. The undeniable fact is that our children's future is shaped both by the values of their parents and the policies of our nation."

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Take the orphanages debate, for example. There is no doubt that many Americans have benefited from being raised by caring people in orphanages. On the other hand, I disagree with those who suggest that children should be taken from their parents and put in orphanages solely because they were born out of wedlock or their parents are poor. This is big government interference into the lives of private citizens at its worst.

All of these concerns will be central to the upcoming decisions about welfare reform. I hope we will learn from the recent verbal skirmishes over orphanages how public discussion of critical issues can be confused and bogged down by polarizing language. And I agree with the new Speaker of the House who said last week that the recent debate over orphanages had become distorted and cheap.

I, too, am deeply disturbed by the outrageous rates of out-of-wedlock births and the welfare dependency they bring. ~~It is high time to take these issues on.~~

If we succeed this year in reforming welfare to make a better future for millions of America's children -- and I believe it is critical to our nation that we do -- perhaps we will be

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Wagging

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First, children are almost always best off with their families. Our legal system presumes that a child should be with his or her parents unless there is convincing evidence that abuse or neglect threatens a child's well-being. That standard should not be changed. But we should look for better ways to identify children at risk, move quickly to help their families and, as a last resort, move children to the best possible out-of-home placement.

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insert LA

Poor parents struggle every day to give their children the most with the least. And often they are among the best parents. Those who think otherwise are letting a handful of sensational media stories create a false stereotype in their minds. Only one-half million of the 5 million children classified as poor currently are placed in out-of-home care [ck numbers]. At the turn of the century, this sort of prejudice was focused on the new immigrants in America. Now, many of those immigrant families stand out as our ideal of the American Dream realized.

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Carrying
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###

Our personal values & our ~~nat~~"l policies
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More resp require ~~and~~
Families & govt
Everyone for us

Too often in the past, we've assumed that
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But this is abt values & responsibilities
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INTRO

PHOTOCOPY
WJC HANDWRITING

(B)

Over the past 25 years I have spent a lot of time and energy working to strengthen families and help children. There is nothing about which I care more. I have written about the legal rights and responsibilities of children in their families and society; represented foster children and parents in lawsuits against government bureaucracies; worked with advocacy groups like the Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families and the Children's Defense Fund to improve education, health care and child care; started programs to teach parenting skills to welfare recipients; served on committees to combat youth violence and child abuse; and volunteered in all sorts of institutions serving children from homeless shelters to group homes to children's hospitals and schools. I have personally struggled with the anguish caused by terminating the parental rights of mothers who desperately want their children but seem unable to care for them. I have had to explain to abused children why being taken from the only home they know is for their protection and not their punishment because for them even harmful attention may be preferable to feeling alone.

(C)

When any of us talk about what is best for children, we should start with a large dose of humility, and then be willing to struggle through the hard questions posed by the collapse of families. I am heartened that the well-being of children and families

increasingly is a focus of attention as Americans face up to ~~explain their frustration at the failure of the welfare system~~ ~~their own frustrations at the individuals and systems failing~~ ~~high rate of illegitimacy, teen pregnancy and the threat of neglectful parenting, poor schooling~~ ~~children and confront the challenges to society from children,~~ ~~bring "battered" our children, aware of their determination to do something about it~~ particularly poor ones, who fall victim to neglectful parenting,

(C2)

Tell the orphanage. Or take for example. There is no doubt that many Americans benefited from being raised in orphanages by caring people. On the other hand, I know of many who suggest that children taken from their parents put in orphanages

who do not need it. I suspect it was a mistake. This is a big question + it helps me understand the privacy of it. I don't know. Their parents are poor. I don't know how to help them.

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families. Our legal system presumes that a child should be with
his or her parents unless there is convincing evidence that abuse

or neglect threatens a child's well-being. That standard should not be changed, but we should look for better ways to identify children at risk, move quickly to help their families, and, if help is not successful by a specified deadline, move children to the best possible out-of-home placement.

Second, those who believe poverty is a disqualification from good parenting probably have not been in the company of poor but hardworking parents. Both the President and The Speaker lost by death and divorce their fathers and were left with their young mothers. Although each of their mothers eventually remarried and each boy was then adopted, if bad luck had struck either mother leaving her impoverished, I can't imagine that mother giving up Bill or Newt to any orphanage or other ~~do-gooder~~ institution without one heck of a fight.

Poor parents still struggle every day to give their children the most with the least often ~~and~~ are among the best parents. Those who think otherwise are letting a handful of sensational media stories create a false stereotype in their minds. At the turn of the century, this sort of prejudice was focused on the new immigrants in America. Now, many of those immigrant families stand out as our ideal of the American Dream realized.

There, it is reported to support families of special problems
~~Clearly, poverty and unemployment are not assets to young~~
before we give up on them.
~~parents. But neither are they indicators that the parents are~~
of
~~unfit. That is why only one-half million rather than the 15~~
million children classified as poor ~~are~~ currently are placed in out-of-home care.

~~3. B. Stungue Fair~~

Certainly there are cases -- too many, and tragically there seem to be more all the time -- where parents abuse their children or are unable or unwilling to meet their family responsibilities. Instances of abuse and neglect occur in rich as well as poor families, but poor families are both more likely to be stressed by economic troubles and identified for government intervention. It is more cost-effective and realistic to help avoid family breakup which is why the President signed the Family and Medical Leave Act ^{which enables people to be get work + get pay by giving} to avoid the conflict between work and ^{the off work ch. on or sub 40 long sick} [illegible] by families. He also insisted on giving working

families earning less than \$27,000 a year a tax cut that averaged ^{to the amount he would be able to go to the gov't} \$1,000 a family last year. ^{also} And the President's budget ~~plan~~ included funding for family preservation ^{program, like the} ^{recently visited}

I recently visited a church-run program in Los Angeles, that receives state and federal funds to help families stay together, and was impressed by the personal success stories I heard and the fact that the work being done was cheaper than any foster care or orphanage could ever be.

^{Fourth,} Whenever dangerous circumstances exist, ~~however~~, children must be protected from harm and moved into alternative settings outside their family. But this should result only as a last resort to keep the child safe.

When children are endangered and only the government acting in its "parens patriae" role has the right to intervene, the challenge is for government to act quickly and decisively to protect the children, action that is often easier said than done.

I call the "Chelsea" test: If, God forbid, my daughter were taken away and put in a group home, foster care, or even an orphanage, would I want her there?

I grew up in a Republican family, and I always thought the Republican Party believed in the value of family -- not in government intrusions into family life. It is my hope that we can now put careless comments about orphanages behind us and join together -- as parents, teachers, ministers, community leaders, and policymakers -- to fulfill our individual and collective responsibilities to America's children.

As the National Conference of Catholic Bishops said in their 1992 pastoral letter entitled, *Putting Families First*:

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I have a feeling if Father Flanagan were here to take part in this debate, his view would reflect the wisdom of the bishops. Taking responsibility for the children in our own lives and all our children is the most sacred duty in our lives. We have to get it right!

###

Over the past 25 years, I have spent a lot of time and energy on children's issues. There is nothing about which I care more. For that reason, I was heartened to see the new Speaker of the House say last week that the recent debate over orphanages had become distorted and cheap.

We all know that the extreme rhetoric we've heard about orphanages is rooted partly in politics. But it is also rooted in a profound frustration we all feel -- as Democrats and Republicans -- over our inability to find solutions to social problems that have only grown worse over the past 30 years.

~~The Republican Party has~~ ^{Some have} suggested that government and the welfare state are responsible for the breakdown of families and the erosion of our social fabric. I believe it is more complicated than that. After all, neglect and abuse of children are not confined to poor families. And it's a false dichotomy to suggest that only parents -- and not government -- have a role in strengthening family life in America.

If we succeed this year in building a better future for America's children -- and I believe it is critical to our nation that we do -- perhaps we will be able to look back at the orphanage debate as a cautionary lesson in how to discuss the most sensitive issues we face. And hopefully what began as an awkward and clumsy debate can be transformed into an honest discussion about the people who matter most in our lives: our children.

Some of what Speaker Gingrich has said about children reflects my own experiences over the past 20 years. I understand the frustration that many people feel toward government and bureaucracies. As a children's advocate, I waged plenty of my own battles with government, and even brought lawsuits on behalf of foster and adopted children and their parents.

From working in a hospital with abused children and taking an extra year at law school to study the legal system's handling of children, I learned that there are no simple solutions. Like most parents, my husband and I have learned that what seems easy in theory turns out to be much more complicated in real life. As a mother, advocate, and lawyer, I also have learned that there are some bedrock principles when it comes to ensuring the well-being of children.

First, children are best off with their families 99 times out of 100. Our society has always felt that a child should be with his or her parents unless there is abuse or neglect.

Clearly, there are instances where families fail and parents harm their children. Every day we read about parents who abandon their children in dumpsters, subject them to physical abuse or, as happened so tragically in South Carolina recently, drown them in a lake. In cases such as these, how can we not intervene quickly and decisively to protect children? These situations demand not only that we act, but that we find the right solution for the individual child because not even abused and neglected children -- much less poor children -- come from cookie-cutters.

In some cases, when the foster care system is weak or foster parents are not available, or when adoptions are not possible, ~~orphanages~~ ^{group homes} staffed with dedicated workers are the best option for children whose parents are unable or unwilling to meet their family responsibilities. But these options should always be a last resort.

The point I have tried to make for many years is that any decision to separate a child from his parents should be made on the basis of the child's safety and well-being. But we should never presume that children should be taken from their families simply because the parents are poor, unmarried, or lacking education.

We are all looking for ways to deal with the sad reality that more and more children in America are born out of wedlock, many to mothers so poor they are on welfare. And we all know that being young and undereducated makes the challenge of being a responsible parent and a good role model that much greater.

Yet even under such difficult family circumstances, most children are better off in their own homes with their own parents. Almost all American parents, regardless of economic status or cultural background, work hard to give their children a solid start in life. They know that children need a secure home, strong values, consistency and love. The love is as rich and the values as sound in the homes of Watts as in Westchester, in Harlem as in Highland Park.

So let's put first things first. Our greatest energy

should be spent promoting marriage, responsible parenting, and independence from the welfare system -- all with a view toward building strong families and creating conditions in which children can flourish. We should provide incentives for fathers to take responsibility for their children and pay child support when marriage doesn't occur. We should help young women on welfare learn to be good mothers and move out of welfare and into work. And we should help young men and women transform what may be a casual decision to bear a child into a serious and responsible decision to be a good parent.

We have tangible examples of programs that work. Recently I visited a Family Preservation program in Los Angeles where a church is keeping families intact by helping parents deal with problems of substance abuse, domestic violence, unemployment and illiteracy [ck?]. Programs such as the Family and Medical Leave law and the Earned Income Tax Credit are aimed at keeping families together that might otherwise be torn apart because of economic pressures.

I grew up in a Republican family, and, although I am now a Democrat, I always thought the Republican Party believed in the value of family -- not in government intrusions into family life. It is my real hope that we can now put careless comments about orphanages behind us and join together -- as parents, teachers, ministers, community leaders, and policymakers -- to fulfill our individual and collective responsibilities to America's children.

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Over the past twenty-five years, I have spent a lot of time working on ways to strengthen families and help children. There is nothing about which I care more, and I am heartened that the well-being of our children increasingly lies at the heart of Americans' discussions of public policy issues like welfare reform and family and community values. This discussion is too important to be captured by political slogans or partisan posturing, but the recent verbal skirmishes over orphanages illustrate how easily public debate can become confused and unhelpful.

Did the Republicans mean to suggest that poverty was a disqualification for effective parenting in advancing the idea that children should be removed from their parents and placed in orphanages solely because their parents were impoverished?

That seemed to be what they were proposing when I called the idea "absurd." The proposal ran counter to our legal and social presumption that a child's best interest was served by preserving the family. After I and others questioned the proposal, Newt Gingrich shifted the ground of the argument by accusing critics, like me, of preferring to have children killed than be placed in safe havens like the movie version of "Boys' Town."

Now all of a sudden I'm painted as defending child killers and Gingrich is advocating voluntary group or foster homes.

That was an ironic charge against me since my long-held position that children should have the right to be protected even against their families had been criticized by Republicans during their 1992 Convention.

Was this exchange enlightening? I spoke in shorthand when I said "absurd", which didn't help anyone understand either my background on these issues or my position, and Gingrich couldn't decide what he favored, but knew his party had caused a ruckus by equating poverty with abuse, so, being the effective debater he is, he shifted position.

OK -- time-out. We need a full debate on the merits which is less polemical, because the stakes are ultimately not about anyone's political advancement. The real question is what's best for our children.

From my experience with children's issues, I have learned there are no simple solutions, but there are some reliable bedrock principles.

First, children are best off with their families 99 times out of 100. Our society has always felt that a child normally should be with his or her parents unless there is abuse or neglect. Regardless of economic status or cultural background or community or region of the country, almost all American parents work hard at the tasks and joys of giving their children a solid start in life. Parents know that children need a secure home, strong values, consistency and love.

Second, those who equate bad parenting with poverty must not have experience with poor but hardworking parents. Poor parents who struggle every day to give their children love, attention and discipline are among the best parents. Those who equate poor parents with poor parenting are letting a handful of the most

sensational media stories create a false stereotype in their minds. At the turn of the century, this prejudice was focused on the new immigrants in America. Now, those families are considered in the light of nostalgia to be an ideal model.

Clearly, poverty and unemployment are not assets to young parents -- nor have they ever been. But they are not indicators that the parents are unfit. If they were, our nation would have fifteen million rather than one half million children in out-of-home care.

Certainly there are cases -- too many, and tragically there seem to be more all the time -- where parents abuse their children or are unable or unwilling to meet their family responsibilities. Many of these parents, like Susan Smith in South Carolina, are not poor. Whenever this happens, children must be protected from harm and moved into alternative settings outside their family. But this should happen only because it is needed to keep the child safe.

Even when we do our utmost to build and sustain strong families, some families fail, and some parents harm their children. Then we must intervene quickly and decisively to protect the children. And we must search for the best interests of the individual child, because not even abused and neglected children, much less poor children, come from cookie-cutters.

Our nation has made great progress on behalf of children in this century, from enacting child labor laws in the early years to family and medical leave last year. But even with that

progress and our genuine concern for children, too many American youngsters today are exhibiting signs of distress at earlier ages as their families fail them and institutions that once supported and nourished family life abdicate responsibility. In some ways our worst-off children are the leading edge of a broader social change in which millions of American children whom we would never consider abused or neglected still suffer erosion of family and community support. As parents struggle to balance the demands of work and family under growing economic and social strain, children from all backgrounds have suffered.

The seeds of abuse and neglect are many: drug-abusing parents, parents without resources, families isolated from social support, parents who were themselves abused as children and who have been unable to avoid repeating the pattern. And the ways to protect and heal the children are similarly diverse: care with non-parental relatives in some instances, in foster homes in other cases, in institutions in yet others, and, when possible to do so safely, back in the parental home if the problem is being cured and it is safe for the children to return.

So long as children are safe and nurtured, the parental home is the place to be. And, given how expensive out-of-home care is, this is one of those lucky instances where what is the better way is also the less expensive way.

Any parent, and any child development specialist, can tell you that creating stable, secure families must be our first line of domestic national defense. Our greatest energy must be

focused on building support systems that help both poor and non-poor parents raise children, that encourage strong neighborhoods, and that provide networks which enhance the safety and well-being of the youngest and most vulnerable among us. These support systems can be knit together from families, schools, religious institutions, civic organizations, and whole communities in a way that unite us on behalf of children rather than divide us along political, ideological or polemical lines.

These are the core problems that we must address. Rather than getting bogged down in a partisan political debate, parents, policymakers, experts, advocates, and government leaders must join together to find reasonable methods of ensuring that every child is raised in a safe and healthy environment. If the government deprives families of the support they need, pushing parents into extreme conditions that breed irresponsibility, abuse and neglect, not only will families, but the social fabric will also be ripped apart. We need to find ways for all American families to get stronger support from both the public and private sectors, ways to reduce abuse and neglect and have fewer children at risk, and ways to assure that children who are abused and neglected get the interventions they need.

Nobody has expressed the mix of supports children need more eloquently than the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in their 1992 pastoral letter entitled, *Putting Families First*:

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You know, I have a feeling if Father Flanagan were here to take part in this debate, his view would reflect the wisdom of the bishops.

The recent verbal skirmishes over orphanages illustrate how easily our public debate over the needs of children and families can become confused and unhelpful. Over the past twenty-five years, I have spent a lot of time and energy on children's issues. There is nothing about which I care more. I am heartened that the well-being of children increasingly lies at the heart of Americans' discussions of public policy and family and community values. Even though this debate began with slogans, it is useful to begin, but we need to conduct it on a more substantive, less political basis.

The safety of children in their homes, schools and neighborhoods, the rebuilding of the economy with enough jobs at family-supporting wages, the moral development of our children, and improving the systems for our children's health and education are particularly urgent concerns. Each is interlinked. For example, moral development depends on the child's relationship to parents, but when they have to struggle economically, less time is spent with children. The greater the economic stress, the greater the social stress.

This growing energy to face the problems of our nation's children is a wonderful development -- if we choose positive and effective solutions. That is why we should look at the orphanage debate as a cautionary lesson about how to discuss such sensitive and important matters.

Did the Republicans mean to suggest that poverty was a disqualification for effective parenting in advancing the idea

that children should be removed from their parents and placed in orphanages solely because their parents were impoverished?

That is what they were proposing when I called the idea "absurd." After I and others questioned the proposal, Newt Gingrich tried to shift the ground of the argument by accusing me of preferring to have children killed than be placed in safe havens like the movie version of "Boys' Town."

Here's the way he did it on "Meet the Press" on December 5th:

"Ms. Myers: Congressman, I'd like to focus on welfare reform. The First Lady, Hillary Rodham Clinton, came after you last week, saying that your proposal to put the children of mothers who could not afford to support them in orphanages was both unbelievable and absurd. How do you respond to that?

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From more than two decades of experience with children's issues, I have learned that there are no simple solutions. But I have also learned that there are some absolutely reliable bedrock principles.

First, children are best off with their families 99 times out of 100. Our society has always felt that a child normally should be with his or her parents unless there is abuse or neglect. Regardless of economic status or cultural background or community or region of the country, almost all American parents work hard at the tasks and joys of giving their children a solid start in life. Parents know that children need a secure home, strong values, consistency and love. The love is as rich and the values are as sound in the homes of Watts as in Westchester, in Harlem as in Highland Park.

Second, those who equate bad parenting with poverty must not have experience with these poor but hardworking parents. Poor parents who struggle every day to give their children the most

with the least are among the best parents. The reality does not support their simple equation. Rather, they are just letting a handful of the most sensational media stories create a false stereotype in their minds. At the turn of the century, this prejudice was focused on the new immigrants in America. Now, those families are considered in the light of nostalgia to be an ideal model.

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Even when we do our utmost to build and sustain strong families, some families fail, and some parents harm their children. Then we must intervene quickly and decisively to protect the children. And we must find the right solution for the individual child, because not even abused and neglected children, much less poor children, come from cookie-cutters.

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The seeds of abuse and neglect are many: drug-abusing parents, parents without resources, families isolated from social service, parents who were themselves abused as children and who have been unable to avoid repeating the pattern. And the ways to protect and heal the children are similarly diverse: care with non-parental relatives in some instances, in foster homes in other cases, in institutions in yet others, and, when possible to do so safely, back in the parental home if the problem is being cured and it is absolutely safe for the children.

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When it comes to building our nation's future, Americans have a long history of putting children first by finding sound, common sense practical solutions. We cannot put our children second, least of all to sloganeering. We must not abandon the wise principles we have applied to such great effect in the past. These principles and our experience must be our guide as we face the new and difficult challenges of today. Taking responsibility for our children is the most sacred duty in our lives. We have to get it right!

follow numbered inserts

Revised ASAP

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Was any of this enlightening ^{to the problem?} I doubt it. I spoke in shorthand when I said "absurd", which didn't help anyone understand my position, and Gingrich couldn't decide what he favored, but knew his party had caused a ruckus by equating poverty with abuse, and so, being the effective ^{debater} attack dog he is, he shifted position.

OK -- time-out. ^{The real question should be} What's best for children?

go to ③

① The well-being of children increasingly lies at the heart of Americans' discussions of public policy and family and community values. The safety of children in their homes, schools and neighborhoods, the rebuilding of the economy with enough jobs at family-supporting wages, the moral development of our children, and improving the systems for our children's health and education are particularly urgent concerns.

② This growing energy to face the problems of our nation's children is a wonderful development--if we choose positive and effective solutions. From more than two decades of attention to children's issues, I have learned that there are no simple solutions. But I have also learned that there are some absolutely reliable bedrock principles. ③

The first is that 99 times out of 100, children are best off with their families. Our society has always felt that a child normally should be with his or her parents unless there is abuse or neglect. Regardless of economic status or cultural background or community or region of the country, almost all American parents work hard at the tasks and joys of giving their children a solid start in life. Parents know that children need a secure home, strong values, consistency and love. The love is as rich and the values are as sound in the homes of Watts as in Westchester, in Harlem as in Highland Park. ~~[Will readers recognize these names?]~~

Those who equate poverty with bad parenting aren't talking to or seeing the many poor parents who struggle every day to give their children the most with the least. Rather, they are just letting a handful of the most sensational media stories create a false stereotype in their minds. Clearly, poverty and unemployment are not assets to young parents. But neither are they indicators that the parents are unfit. If they were, our nation would have fifteen million rather than one half million children in out-of-home care.

Certainly there are cases--too many, and tragically there seem to be more all the time -- where parents abuse their children or are unable or unwilling to meet their family responsibilities. Whenever this happens, children must be protected from harm and moved into alternative settings outside their family.

But this should happen only because it is needed to keep the child safe. Any parent, and any child development specialist, can tell you that creating stable, secure families must be our first line of domestic national defense. Our greatest energy must be focused on building support systems that help both poor and non-poor parents raise children, that encourage strong neighborhoods, and that provide networks which enhance the safety and well-being of the youngest and most vulnerable among us.

These support systems can be knit together from families, schools, religious institutions, civic organizations, and whole communities in a way that unites us on behalf of children rather than divides us along political, ideological or rhetorical lines. The fabric will only be ripped apart, however, if the government pursues policies that deprive families of the support they need and that push parents into the extreme circumstances that breed irresponsibility, abuse and neglect.

But even when we do our utmost to build and sustain strong families, some families fail, and some parents harm their children.

Then we must intervene quickly and decisively to protect the children. And we must find the right solution for the individual child, because not even abused and neglected children, much less poor children, come from cookie-cutters.

The seeds of abuse and neglect are many: drug-abusing parents, parents without resources, families isolated from social services, parents who were themselves abused as children and who have been unable to avoid repeating the pattern. And the ways to protect and heal the children are similarly diverse: care with non-parental relatives in some instances, in foster family homes in other cases, in institutions in yet others, and, when possible to do so safely, back in the parental home if the problem is being cured and it is absolutely safe for the children.

So long as children are safe and nurtured, the parental home is the place to be. And, given how expensive out-of-home care is, this is one of those lucky instances where what is the better way is also the less expensive way.

Our nation has made great progress on behalf of children in this century, from child labor laws in the early years to family leave last year. But even with that progress and our genuine concern for children, too many American youngsters today are exhibiting signs of distress at earlier ages as their families fail them and institutions that once supported and nourished family life have frayed. In some ways our worst-off children are the leading edge of a broader social change in which millions of American children whom we would never consider abused or neglected still have suffered an erosion of family and community support. [Will HRC want to say this?] As parents struggle to balance the demands of work and family and the family as an institution has confronted growing strain, children from all backgrounds have suffered.

These are the core problems that we must address. Rather than getting bogged down in a partisan political debate, parents, policymakers, experts, advocates, and government leaders must join together to find reasonable methods of ensuring that every child is raised in a safe and healthy environment. We need to find ways for all American families to get stronger support from both the public and private sectors, ways to reduce abuse and neglect and have fewer children at risk, and ways to assure that children who are abused and neglected get the interventions they need.

Nobody has expressed the mix of supports children need more eloquently than the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in their 1992 pastoral letter entitled Putting Families First:

"No government can love a child, and no policy can substitute for a family's care. But, government can either support or undermine families. There has been an unfortunate, unnecessary, and unreal polarization in discussion [about] how best to help families. The undeniable fact is that our children's future is shaped both by the values of their parents and the policies of our nation."

When it comes to building our nation's future, Americans have a long history of putting children first by finding sound, common sense solutions. As we face new and more difficult challenges today, we must not abandon the wise principles we have applied in the past. Taking responsibility for our children is the most sacred

duty in our lives.We have to get it right!

TD: Maggie

Jisa

pelanne

Jisa

for your review
before HRC gets back. Pam

The recent verbal skirmishes over orphanages illustrate how easily our public debate over the needs of children and families can become confused and unhelpful. Over the past twenty-five years, I have spent a lot of time and energy on children's issues. There is nothing about which I care more. I am heartened that the well-being of children increasingly lies at the heart of Americans' discussions of public policy and family and community values. The safety of children in their homes, schools and neighborhoods, the rebuilding of the economy with enough jobs at family-supporting wages, the moral development of our children, and improving the systems for our children's health and education are particularly urgent concerns.

This growing energy to face the problems of our nation's children is a wonderful development -- if we choose positive and effective solutions. That is why we should look at the orphanage debate as a cautionary lesson about how to discuss such sensitive and important matters.

Did the Republicans mean to suggest that poverty was a disqualification for effective parenting in advancing the idea that children should be removed from their parents and placed in orphanages solely because their parents were impoverished?

That is what I thought they were proposing when I called the idea "absurd." After I and others questioned the proposal, Newt Gingrich tried to shift the ground of the argument by accusing me of preferring to have children killed than be placed in safe havens like the movie version of "Boys' Town."

Here's the way he did it on "Meet the Press" on

December 5th:

"Ms. Myers: Congressman, I'd like to focus on welfare reform. The First Lady, Hillary Rodham Clinton, came after you last week, saying that your proposal to put the children of mothers who could not afford to support them in orphanages was both unbelievable and absurd. How do you respond to that?

Mr. Gingrich: I'd ask her to go to Blockbuster and rent the Mickey Rooney movie about 'Boys' Town.

I mean, my answer to her in part is, you know, the little four year-old who was thrown off the balcony in Chicago would have been a heck of a lot better off at Boys' Town, that the 11 year-old who was killed after he killed the 14 year-old might have had a chance to live in a supervised boarding school, that the children you see in D.C. killed every weekend might be better off in a group home or a foster home."

Now all of a sudden I'm painted as defending child killers and Gingrich is advocating voluntary group or foster homes.

Was any of this enlightening? I doubt it. I spoke in shorthand when I said "absurd" which didn't help anyone understand my position, and Gingrich couldn't decide what he favored, but knew his party had caused a ruckus by equating poverty with abuse, so, being the effective debater he is, he shifted position.

OK -- time-out. The real question should be what's best for children?

From more than two decades of attention to children's issues, I have learned that there are no simple solutions. But I have also learned that there are some absolutely reliable bedrock principles.

The first is that 99 times out of 100, children are best off with their families. Our society has always felt that a child normally should be with his or her parents unless there is abuse or neglect. Regardless of economic status or cultural background or community or region of the country, almost all American parents work hard at the tasks and joys of giving their children a solid start in life. Parents know that children need a secure home, strong values, consistency and love. The love is as rich and the values are as sound in the homes of Watts as in Westchester, in Harlem as in Highland Park.

Those who equate poverty with bad parenting aren't talking to or seeing the many poor parents who struggle every day to give their children the most with the least. Rather, they are just letting a handful of the most sensational media stories create a false stereotype in their minds. Clearly, poverty and unemployment are not assets to young parents. But neither are they indicators that the parents are unfit. If they were, our nation would have fifteen million rather than one half million children in out-of-home care.

Certainly there are cases -- too many, and tragically there seem to be more all the time -- where parents abuse their children or are unable or unwilling to meet their family

responsibilities. Whenever this happens, children must be protected from harm and moved into alternative settings outside their family.

But this should happen only because it is needed to keep the child safe. Any parent, and any child development specialist, can tell you that creating stable, secure families must be our first line of domestic national defense. Our greatest energy must be focused on building support systems that help both poor and non-poor parents raise children, that encourage strong neighborhoods, and that provide networks which enhance the safety and well-being of the youngest and most vulnerable among us.

These support systems can be knit together from families, schools, religious institutions, civic organizations, and whole communities in a way that unites us on behalf of children rather than divides us along political, ideological or rhetorical lines. The fabric will only be ripped apart, however, if the government pursues policies that deprive families of the support they need and that push parents into the extreme circumstances that breed irresponsibility, abuse and neglect.

But even when we do our utmost to build and sustain strong families, some families fail, and some parents harm their children. Then we must intervene quickly and decisively to protect the children. And we must find the right solution for the individual child, because not even abused and neglected children, much less poor children, come from cookie-cutters.

The seeds of abuse and neglect are many: drug-abusing parents, parents without resources, families isolated from social services, parents who were themselves abused as children and who have been unable to avoid repeating the pattern. And the ways to protect and heal the children are similarly diverse: care with non-parental relatives in some instances, in foster family homes in other cases, in institutions in yet others, and, when possible to do so safely, back in the parental home if the problem is being cured and it is absolutely safe for the children.

So long as children are safe and nurtured, the parental home is the place to be. And, given how expensive out-of-home care is, this is one of those lucky instances where what is the better way is also the less expensive way.

Our nation has made great progress on behalf of children in this century, from child labor laws in the early years to family leave last year. But even with that progress and our genuine concern for children, too many American youngsters today are exhibiting signs of distress at earlier ages as their families fail them and institutions that once supported and nourished family life have frayed. In some ways our worst-off children are the leading edge of a broader social change in which millions of American children whom we would never consider abused or neglected still have suffered erosion of family and community support. As parents struggle to balance the demands of work and family and the family as an institution has confronted growing strain, children from all backgrounds have suffered.

These are the core problems that we must address. Rather than getting bogged down in a partisan political debate, parents, policymakers, experts, advocates, and government leaders must join together to find reasonable methods of ensuring that every child is raised in a safe and healthy environment. We need to find ways for all American families to get stronger support from both the public and private sectors, ways to reduce abuse and neglect and have fewer children at risk, and ways to assure that children who are abused and neglected get the interventions they need.

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When it comes to building our nation's future, Americans have a long history of putting children first by finding sound, common sense solutions. As we face new and more difficult challenges today, we must not abandon the wise principles we have applied in the past. Taking responsibility for our children is the most sacred duty in our lives. We have to get it right!

The recent verbal skirmishes over orphanages illustrate how easily our public debate over the needs of children and families can become confused and unhelpful. Over the past twenty-five years, I have spent a lot of time and energy on children's issues. There is nothing about which I care more. I am heartened that the well-being of children increasingly lies at the heart of Americans' discussions of public policy and family and community values. Even though this debate began with slogans, it is useful to begin, but we need to conduct it on a more substantive, less political basis.

The safety of children in their homes, schools and neighborhoods, the rebuilding of the economy with enough jobs at family-supporting wages, the moral development of our children, and improving the systems for our children's health and education are particularly urgent concerns. Each is interlinked. For example, moral development depends on the child's relationship to parents, but when they have to struggle economically, less time is spent with children. The greater the economic stress, the greater the social stress.

This growing energy to face the problems of our nation's children is a wonderful development -- if we choose positive and effective solutions. That is why we should look at the orphanage debate as a cautionary lesson about how to discuss such sensitive and important matters.

Did the Republicans mean to suggest that poverty was a disqualification for effective parenting in advancing the idea

that children should be removed from their parents and placed in orphanages solely because their parents were impoverished?

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OK -- time-out. We need a full debate on the merits which is less polemical, because the stakes are ultimately not about anyone's political advancement. The real question is what's best for our children.

From more than two decades of experience with children's issues, I have learned that there are no simple solutions. But I have also learned that there are some absolutely reliable bedrock principles.

First, children are best off with their families 99 times out of 100. Our society has always felt that a child normally should be with his or her parents unless there is abuse or neglect. Regardless of economic status or cultural background or community or region of the country, almost all American parents work hard at the tasks and joys of giving their children a solid start in life. Parents know that children need a secure home, strong values, consistency and love. The love is as rich and the values are as sound in the homes of Watts as in Westchester, in Harlem as in Highland Park.

Second, those who equate bad parenting with poverty must not have experience with these poor but hardworking parents. Poor parents who struggle every day to give their children the most

with the least are among the best parents. The reality does not support their simple equation. Rather, they are just letting a handful of the most sensational media stories create a false stereotype in their minds. At the turn of the century, this prejudice was focused on the new immigrants in America. Now, those families are considered in the light of nostalgia to be an ideal model.

Clearly, poverty and unemployment are not assets to young parents -- nor have they ever been. Nor are they indicators that the parents are unfit. If they were, our nation would have fifteen million rather than one half million children in out-of-home care.

Certainly there are cases -- too many, and tragically there seem to be more all the time -- where parents abuse their children or are unable or unwilling to meet their family responsibilities. Many of these parents are not poor. Whenever this happens, children must be protected from harm and moved into alternative settings outside their family. But this should happen only because it is needed to keep the child safe.

Even when we do our utmost to build and sustain strong families, some families fail, and some parents harm their children. Then we must intervene quickly and decisively to protect the children. And we must find the right solution for the individual child, because not even abused and neglected children, much less poor children, come from cookie-cutters.

Our nation has made great progress on behalf of children in this century, from enacting child labor laws in the early years to family and medical leave last year. But even with that progress and our genuine concern for children, too many American youngsters today are exhibiting signs of distress at earlier ages as their families fail them and institutions that once supported and nourished family life have frayed. In some ways our worst-off children are the leading edge of a broader social change in which millions of American children whom we would never consider abused or neglected still have suffered erosion of family and community support. As parents struggle to balance the demands of work and family and the family as an institution has confronted growing strain, children from all backgrounds have suffered.

The seeds of abuse and neglect are many: drug-abusing parents, parents without resources, families isolated from social service, parents who were themselves abused as children and who have been unable to avoid repeating the pattern. And the ways to protect and heal the children are similarly diverse: care with non-parental relatives in some instances, in foster homes in other cases, in institutions in yet others, and, when possible to do so safely, back in the parental home if the problem is being cured and it is absolutely safe for the children.

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These are the core problems that we must address. Rather than getting bogged down in a partisan political debate, parents, policymakers, experts, advocates, and government leaders must join together to find reasonable methods of ensuring that every child is raised in a safe and healthy environment. If the government deprives families of the support they need, pushing parents into extreme conditions that breed irresponsibility, abuse and neglect, not only ~~will~~ families, but the social fabric will be ripped apart. We need to find ways for all American families to get stronger support from both the public and private sectors, ways to reduce abuse and neglect and have fewer children at risk, and ways to assure that children who are abused and neglected get the ^{help} ~~interventions~~ they need.

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You know, I have a feeling if Father Flanagan were here to take part in this debate, his view would reflect the wisdom of the bishops.

When it comes to building our nation's future, Americans have a long history of putting children first by finding sound, common sense practical solutions. We cannot put our children second, least of all to sloganeering. We must not abandon the wise principles we have applied to such great effect in the past. These principles and our experience must be our guide as we face the new and difficult challenges of today. Taking responsibility for our children is the most sacred duty in our lives. We have to get it right!

Over the past 25 years I have spent a lot of time and energy working to strengthen families and help children. There is nothing about which I care more. I have written about the legal rights and responsibilities of children in their families and society; represented foster children and parents in lawsuits against government bureaucracies; worked with advocacy groups like the Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families and the Children's Defense Fund to improve education, health care and child care; started programs to teach parenting skills to welfare recipients; served on committees to combat youth violence and child abuse; and volunteered in all sorts of institutions serving children from homeless shelters to group homes to children's hospitals and schools. I have personally struggled with the anguish caused by terminating the parental rights of mothers who desperately want their children but seem unable to care for them. I have had to explain to abused children why being taken from the only home they know is for their protection and not their punishment because for them even harmful attention may be preferable to feeling alone.

When any of us talk about what is best for children, we should start with a large dose of humility, and then be willing to struggle through the hard questions posed by the collapse of families. I am heartened that the well-being of children increasingly is a focus of attention as Americans face up to their own frustrations at the individuals and systems failing children and confront the challenges to society from children, particularly poor ones, who fall victim to neglectful parenting,

violence, drugs and alcohol abuse, poor schooling and hopelessness. All of these concerns will be central to the decisions about welfare reform, and I hope we will learn from the recent verbal skirmishes over orphanages how public discussion of critical issues can be confused and bogged down by polarizing language. I agree with the new Speaker of the House who said last week that the recent debate over orphanages had become distorted and cheap.

If we succeed this year in reforming welfare to make a better future for millions of America's children -- and I believe it is critical to our nation that we do -- perhaps we will be able to look back at the orphanage debate as a cautionary lesson in how to discuss sensitive and important matters. And, hopefully, we will understand that characterizing whole groups of Americans with broad, unfair stereotypes will not lead us to positive or [fair/enlightened?] solutions. To equate poverty with bad parenting, for example, is no more valid than saying all tall people are smart.

After more than two decades on children's issues, I have learned that there are no simple solutions. Like most parents, my husband and I have learned that what often seems easy in theory turns out to be more complicated in real life. But I have also learned that there are some absolutely bedrock principles.

First, children are best off with their families 99 times out of 100. Our society has always felt that a child should be with his or her parents unless there is abuse or neglect.

Regardless of economic status or cultural background or community or region of the country, almost all American parents work hard at the tasks and joys of giving their children a solid start in life. Parents know that children need a secure home, strong values, consistency and love. The love is as rich and the values are as sound in the homes of Watts as in Westchester, in Harlem as in Highland Park.

Second, those who believe poverty is a disqualification from good parenting probably have not been in the company of poor but hardworking parents. Poor parents who struggle every day to give their children the most with the least often are among the best parents. Those who think otherwise are letting a handful of sensational media stories create a false stereotype in their minds. At the turn of the century, this sort of prejudice was focused on the new immigrants in America. Now, many of those immigrant families stand out as our ideal of the American Dream realized.

Clearly, poverty and unemployment are not assets to young parents. But neither are they indicators that the parents are unfit. That is why only one-half million -- rather than the 15 million children classified as poor -- currently are placed in out-of-home care.

Certainly there are cases -- too many, and tragically there seem to be more all the time -- where parents abuse their children or are unable or unwilling to meet their family

responsibilities. Instances of abuse and neglect occur in families across the socio-economic spectrum, from rich to poor.

Whenever such dangerous circumstances exist, children must be protected from harm and moved into alternative settings outside their family. But this should result only as a last resort to keep the child safe.

Sadly, even when we do our utmost to build and sustain strong families, some families fail, and some parents harm their children. Every day we read stories about parents who abandon their children in dumpsters, subject them to physical abuse or, as happened so tragically in South Carolina recently, drown them in a lake.

In cases such as these, we need to intervene quickly and decisively to protect the children but that is often easier said than done. It is [appropriate?] that removing children from their parents is time consuming and difficult. And, it is often difficult to justify the effects on children who are left to languish in the insecurity of the foster care system or left to its dangers of inadequate institutional care. These situations demand not only that we act, but that we find the right solution for the individual child, because not even abused and neglected children, much less poor children, come from cookie-cutters.

The point I have tried to make for many years is that any decision to separate a child from his parents should be made on the basis of the child's safety and well-being. But we should

never permit children to be taken from their families simply because the parents are poor, unmarried, or lacking education.

We are all looking for ways to deal with the sad reality that more and more children in America are born out of wedlock, many to mothers so poor they are on welfare. And we all know that being young and undereducated makes the challenge of being a responsible parent and a good role model that much greater.

Yet even under such difficult family circumstances, most children are better off in their own homes with their own parents. Almost all American parents, regardless of economic status or cultural background, work hard to give their children a solid start in life. They know that children need a secure home, strong values, consistency and love. The love is as rich and the values as sound in the homes of Watts as in Westchester, in Harlem as in Highland Park.

So let's put first things first. Our greatest energy should be spent promoting marriage, responsible parenting, and independence from the welfare system -- all with a view toward building strong families and creating conditions in which children can flourish. We should provide incentives for fathers to take responsibility for their children and pay child support when marriage doesn't occur or divorce does. We should help young women on welfare learn to be good mothers and move out of welfare and into work. We should encourage the adoption of children who cannot be returned to their parents. And we should help young men and women transform what may be a casual decision

to bear a child into a serious and responsible decision to be a good parent.

We have tangible examples of programs that work. Recently I visited a church in Los Angeles where the pastor and congregation are keeping families intact by helping parents deal with problems of substance abuse, domestic violence, unemployment and illiteracy [ck?]. The church receives federal and state funds to preserve families which is far cheaper than dealing with the costs of broken families and the problems they cause. When families break up and children are placed in foster care, or group homes or other non-parental placement the bureaucracies and expenses increase significantly. Removing children from their parents should always be a last resort. Programs such as the Family and Medical Leave law and the Earned Income Tax Credit are designed to keep together families strained by economic or other pressures.

I grew up in a Republican family, and I always thought the Republican Party believed in the value of family -- not in government intrusions into family life. It is my real hope that we can now put careless comments about orphanages behind us and join together -- as parents, teachers, ministers, community leaders, and policymakers -- to fulfill our individual and collective responsibilities to America's children.

As the National Conference of Catholic Bishops said in their 1992 pastoral letter entitled, *Putting Families First*:

"No government can love a child, and no policy can substitute for a family's care. But, government can either support or undermine families. There has been an unfortunate, unnecessary and unreal polarization in discussion [about] how best to help families. The undeniable fact is that our children's future is shaped both by the values of their parents and the policies of our nation."

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last

Over the past 25 years I have spent a lot of time and energy working to strengthen families and help children. There is nothing about which I care more. I have written about the legal rights and responsibilities of children in their families and society; represented foster children and parents in lawsuits against government bureaucracies; worked with advocacy groups like the Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families and the Children's Defense Fund to improve education, health care and child care; started programs to teach parenting skills to welfare recipients; served on committees to combat youth violence and child abuse; and volunteered in all sorts of institutions serving children from homeless shelters to group homes to children's hospitals and schools. I have personally struggled with the anguish caused by terminating the parental rights of mothers who desperately want their children but seem unable to care for them. I have had to explain to abused children why being taken from the only home they know is for their protection and not their punishment because for them even harmful attention may be preferable to feeling alone.

When any of us talk about what is best for children, we should start with a large dose of humility, and then be willing to struggle through the hard questions posed by the collapse of families. I am heartened that the well-being of children increasingly is a focus of attention as Americans face up to their own frustrations at the individuals and systems failing children and confront the challenges to society from children, particularly poor ones, who fall victim to neglectful parenting,

violence, drug and alcohol abuse, poor schooling and hopelessness. All of these concerns will be central to the upcoming decisions about welfare reform, and I hope we will learn from the recent verbal skirmishes over orphanages how public discussion of critical issues can be confused and bogged down by polarizing language. I agree with the new Speaker of the House who said last week that the recent debate over orphanages had become distorted and cheap.

If we succeed this year in reforming welfare to make a better future for millions of America's children -- and I believe it is critical to our nation that we do -- perhaps we will be able to look back at the orphanage debate as a cautionary lesson in how to discuss sensitive and important matters. And, hopefully, we will understand that characterizing whole groups of Americans with broad, unfair stereotypes will not lead us to positive or fair solutions. To equate poverty with bad parenting, for example, is no more valid than saying all tall people are smart.

After more than two decades working on children's issues, I have learned there are no simple solutions. Like most parents, my husband and I have learned that what often seems easy in theory turns out to be more complicated in real life. But I have also learned that there are some absolutely bedrock principles.

First, children are almost always best off with their families. Our legal system presumes that a child should be with his or her parents unless there is convincing evidence that abuse

or neglect threatens a child's well-being. That standard should not be changed, but we should look for better ways to identify children at risk, move quickly to help their families, and, if help is not successful by a specified deadline, move children to the best possible out-of-home placement.

Second, those who believe poverty is a disqualification from good parenting probably have not been in the company of poor but hardworking parents. Both the President and The Speaker lost by death and divorce their fathers and were left with their young mothers. Although each of their mothers eventually remarried and each boy was then adopted, if bad luck had struck either mother leaving her impoverished, I can't imagine that mother giving up Bill or Newt to any orphanage or other do-gooder institution without one heck of a fight.

Poor parents still struggle every day to give their children the most with the least often and are among the best parents. Those who think otherwise are letting a handful of sensational media stories create a false stereotype in their minds. At the turn of the century, this sort of prejudice was focused on the new immigrants in America. Now, many of those immigrant families stand out as our ideal of the American Dream realized.

Clearly, poverty and unemployment are not assets to young parents. But neither are they indicators that the parents are unfit. That is why only one-half million -- rather than the 15 million children classified as poor -- currently are placed in out-of-home care.

Certainly there are cases -- too many, and tragically there seem to be more all the time -- where parents abuse their children or are unable or unwilling to meet their family responsibilities. Instances of abuse and neglect occur in rich as well as poor families, but poor families are both more likely to be stressed by economic troubles and identified for government intervention. It is more cost-effective and realistic to help avoid family breakup which is why the President signed the Family and Medical Leave Act to avoid the conflict between work and [illegible] by families. He also insisted on giving working families earning less than \$27,000 a year a tax cut that averaged \$1,000 a family last year. And the President's budget plan included funding for family preservation.

I recently visited a church-run program in Los Angeles that receives state and federal funds to help families stay together and was impressed by the personal success stories I heard and the fact that the work being done was cheaper than any foster care or orphanage could ever be.

Whenever dangerous circumstances exist, however, children must be protected from harm and moved into alternative settings outside their family. But this should result only as a last resort to keep the child safe.

When children are endangered and only the government acting in its "parens patriae" role has the right to intervene, the challenge is for government to act quickly and decisively to protect the children, action that is often easier said than done.

Removing children from their parents is -- and should be -- difficult both because of the seriousness of the matter and because it is difficult to justify what happens to the children once they are removed. Children are left to languish in the insecurity of the foster care system or left to inadequate institutional care. When the government is forced to remove a child it should be required to find the right solution for that child, because not even abused and neglected children, much less poor children, come from cookie-cutters.

The point I have tried to make for many years is that any decision to separate a child from his parents should be made on the basis of the child's safety and well-being. But we should never permit children to be taken from their families simply because the parents are poor, unmarried, or lacking education.

So let's put first things first. Our greatest energy should be spent promoting marriage, responsible parenting, and independence from the welfare system -- all with a view toward building strong families and creating conditions in which children can flourish. We should provide incentives for fathers to take responsibility for their children and pay child support when marriage doesn't occur or divorce does. We should insist that young men who casually father children take responsibility and help young women on welfare learn to be good mothers and move out of welfare and into work. We should encourage the adoption of children who cannot be returned to their parents. We should insist that any institution we establish for children passes what

I call the "Chelsea" test: If, God forbid, my daughter were taken away and put in a group home, foster care, or even an orphanage, would I want her there?

I grew up in a Republican family, and I always thought the Republican Party believed in the value of family -- not in government intrusions into family life. It is my hope that we can now put careless comments about orphanages behind us and join together -- as parents, teachers, ministers, community leaders, and policymakers -- to fulfill our individual and collective responsibilities to America's children.

As the National Conference of Catholic Bishops said in their 1992 pastoral letter entitled, *Putting Families First*:

"No government can love a child, and no policy can substitute for a family's care. But, government can either support or undermine families. There has been an unfortunate, unnecessary and unreal polarization in discussion [about] how best to help families. The undeniable fact is that our children's future is shaped both by the values of their parents and the policies of our nation."

I have a feeling if Father Flanagan were here to take part in this debate, his view would reflect the wisdom of the bishops. Taking responsibility for the children in our own lives and all our children is the most sacred duty in our lives. We have to get it right!

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Over the past 25 years I have spent a lot of time and energy working to strengthen families and help children. There is nothing about which I care more. I have written about the legal rights and responsibilities of children in their families and society; represented foster children and parents in lawsuits against government bureaucracies; worked with advocacy groups like the Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families and the Children's Defense Fund to improve education, health care and child care; started programs to teach parenting skills to welfare recipients; served on committees to combat youth violence and child abuse; and volunteered in all sorts of institutions serving children from homeless shelters to group homes to children's hospitals and schools. I have personally struggled with the anguish caused by terminating the parental rights of mothers who desperately want their children but seem unable to care for them. I have had to explain to abused children why being taken from the only home they know is for their protection and not their punishment because for them even harmful attention may be preferable to feeling alone.

When any of us talk about what is best for children, we should start with a large dose of humility, and then be willing to struggle through the hard questions posed by the collapse of families. I am heartened that the well-being of children increasingly is a focus of attention as Americans face up to their own frustrations at the individuals and systems failing children and confront the challenges to society from children, particularly poor ones, who fall victim to neglectful parenting,

violence, drug and alcohol abuse, poor schooling and hopelessness. All of these concerns will be central to the upcoming decisions about welfare reform, and I hope we will learn from the recent verbal skirmishes over orphanages how public discussion of critical issues can be confused and bogged down by polarizing language. I agree with the new Speaker of the House who said last week that the recent debate over orphanages had become distorted and cheap.

If we succeed this year in reforming welfare to make a better future for millions of America's children -- and I believe it is critical to our nation that we do -- perhaps we will be able to look back at the orphanage debate as a cautionary lesson in how to discuss sensitive and important matters. And, hopefully, we will understand that characterizing whole groups of Americans with broad, unfair stereotypes will not lead us to positive or fair solutions. To equate poverty with bad parenting, for example, is no more valid than saying all tall people are smart.

After more than two decades working on children's issues, I have learned there are no simple solutions. Like most parents, my husband and I have learned that what often seems easy in theory turns out to be more complicated in real life. But I have also learned that there are some absolutely bedrock principles.

First, children are almost always best off with their families. Our legal system presumes that a child should be with his or her parents unless there is convincing evidence ^{that} ~~of~~ abuse

or neglect threatens a child's well-being. That standard should not be changed, but we should look for better ways to identify children at risk, move quickly to help their families, and, if help is not successful by a specified deadline, move children to the best possible out-of-home placement.

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