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**PRESS RELEASE**

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## For immediate release

### **New Data Finds 13.8% of Nebraska Children in Poverty: Child Poverty Remains Higher Than 2001 Recession Levels, Uninsured Rates Continue to Increase**

OMAHA, Nebraska (August 28, 2007) – According to the Census Bureau data released today, child poverty in Nebraska remains higher in 2006 at 13.8 percent (59,839 children) than in 2001 at 13.0 percent.

“These figures are disconcerting considering the economic recovery our country has experienced since the 2001 recession,” says Annemarie Bailey Fowler, Research Coordinator with Voices for Children in Nebraska.

Overall poverty in Nebraska also rose to 9.9 percent for the 2005-2006 period from 9.0 percent in the 2000-2001 period.

After five years of economic growth, there is no statistically significant decline in poverty for children or adults, aged 18 to 64. Census data show that many low- and moderate-income families have not regained what was lost during the recession. Financial stability and prosperity have not been shared by all Nebraskans; instead, economic gains have been concentrated in the highest-income population, leaving low- and moderate-income families falling further behind.

For several years the President has cut funding for programs and services that provide financial stability to Nebraskan families. This includes cuts in job training for youth and adults, adult education, Pell grants for postsecondary education, home heating and cooling assistance, public health services for children and several K-12 education programs. Increasing poverty rates mean these programs need to be fully funded, not cut.

#### HEALTH INSURANCE

45,000 Nebraska children (10.1 percent of the child population) did not have health insurance coverage in 2006, according to Census Bureau data released today. Nationwide, the number of uninsured children has increased to 11.7 percent (8.7 million) in 2006, up from 10.9 percent (8 million) in 2005.

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The health insurance numbers are of particular interest given the fact that Congress and the President are currently engaged in a showdown over children's health insurance. The numbers clarify the need for the President to reconsider his vow to veto legislation recently passed by both Houses of Congress. This legislation would renew and strengthen the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) and is to be debated in Conference following the August recess.

Despite American families' continued struggle to afford increasing health insurance costs for their children, some Nebraska representatives in Congress continue to oppose legislation that would extend health insurance to thousands of uninsured children in Nebraska. Prior to the congressional recess, only Senator Nelson voted in favor of continuing access to health coverage for children.

"Without a significant increase in federal funding for SCHIP, our SCHIP program will not be able to extend coverage to the startling number of uninsured children in our state, a large majority of which are currently eligible for the program but remain unenrolled. Federal SCHIP reauthorization provides an important opportunity for Nebraska's representatives to make a critical vote for Nebraska's uninsured children," says Tiffany Seibert, Policy Research Associate at Voices for Children in Nebraska.

#### HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE CENSUS BUREAU DATA RELEASE

- An average total of 197,037 Nebraskans (11.5 percent of the population) were in poverty in 2006.
- In 2006, the family poverty rate in Nebraska was 7.8 percent compared to 7.1 percent in 2001.
- The median Nebraska household income in 2006 was \$45,474 – an increase over the previous years.
- The 2005-2006 average poverty rate in the United States has remained high at 12.5 percent compared to 11.5 percent in 2000-2001.
- An average of 194,000 Nebraskans were without health insurance over the 2004-2006 period.

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