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Kresnak: What's the agenda for kids?

So much of what we're hearing from Sens. Barack Obama and John McCain and the media pundits these days is about the national economy and the possibility of a deep recession. sense - it's the No. 1 concern among Americans.

But in these discussions we also must look at the long-term of America's future. We must talk how best to position our young people who make up our country's future.

We know the jobs of the future will require a work force that is well educated, creative and If we don't invest in our kids now, those jobs - like the hundreds of thousands of that have evaporated in recent years - will end up overseas, in countries with the foresight to young children quality preschool programs, help older children with challenging school ensure that all children have access to health care.

Unfortunately, many in Washington seem to put children at the bottom of their list. A recent First Focus, a national nonpartisan child advocacy organization, documents that federal children and youth has declined 10 percent in just the past five years.

Michigan is increasingly reliant on federal funds for basic services for children and families. these services will be subject to deep cuts if federal spending fails to keep up with the needs of at-risk children and families.

For example, more than 900,000 Michigan children - about one-third of the state's population children - are in either the MICHild insurance plan or Medicaid. But another 160,000 low-Michigan children still have no health insurance, despite the fact that two-thirds of them either MICHild or Medicaid. Several studies have shown kids with chronic diseases such as have higher school absentee rates, do poorly on tests and are at greater risk of dropping

Congress also needs to help Michigan fix its growing dropout crisis.

More than 21,000 Michigan students dropped out of school last year, and more than one in Michigan adults do not have a high school diploma. African-American, American Indian youths are more than twice as likely to leave school without diplomas. Many of them will end welfare or involved in the criminal justice system. With an average dropout rate of 15 Michigan needs help in the form of federal incentives for multiple pathways to graduation people, including creative school/community linkages that would help dropouts re-connect educational opportunities.

Voters need to take a hard look at what the candidates are saying about investing in can learn more about the candidates in your district and how you can help make children a this year's election and in the next administration by going to www.michiganschildren.org.

And, most importantly, vote with Michigan's children in mind.
