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OPINION

Outstanding Mentors and Role Models

No success without a successor

"You are where you are today because you stand on somebody's shoulders. And wherever you are heading, you cannot get there by yourself. If you stand on the shoulders of others, you have a reciprocal responsibility to live your life so that others may stand on your shoulders. It's the quid pro quo of life. We exist temporarily through what we take, but we live forever through what we give." – Vernon E. Jordan, Jr.



BY MARC H. MORIAL

When I began my career in public service 25 years ago, I was fortunate to have outstanding mentors and role models, most notably my own parents.

Ernest "Dutch" Morial and Sybil Morial were – and my mother continues to be – tireless activists and advocates for civil rights and social justice. I grew up in the movement, and was inspired by heroes such as Whitney M. Young, Roy Wilkins, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Dorothy Height.

I first sought elected office in the era of Douglas Wilder, the first black governor of Virginia, and Carol Mosely Braun, the first black wom-

an elected to the U.S. Senate. The management guru Peter Drucker said "there is no success without a successor," and while I humbly pray that I may represent the success of my mentors and role models, I recognize that all of us are part of a continuum.

We launched Urban League 25 to recognize and encourage the best and brightest leaders under 40 – the next generation of Dr. Mae Jemisons and Colin Powells and Barack Obamas.

When I was appointed president of the National Urban League, I remember well that one of my concerns when I joined was whether we would be able to replace the giants of the movement, the disciples of Whitney M. Young, with peo-

ple who are not only qualified and committed, but who also recognized the needs and the potential of a rapidly-changing political, technological and social landscape.

We have succeeded beyond my wildest dreams. Young people are joining the movement at an unprecedented rate, and several of our affiliate CEOs have risen from the ranks of our Young Professionals.

It is these young men and women, and their counterparts in business, science, government and the arts that we will to recognize with Urban League 25.

From corporate to government to media and technology, Urban League 25

honorees are those who are unwilling to accept the status quo. They are change agents who have reinvented business models for a new era. They believe unreachable summits do not exist. Their objective is simple yet ambitious: To redefine and power the digital revolution.

In the coming weeks, we will begin soliciting nominations for our first Urban League 25 honorees. It's a project that is close to my heart, and I look forward to celebrating the excellence that fuels not only our movement but our national institutions and culture.

Marc H. Morial is president and chief executive officer of the National Urban League.

Tax Cuts at the Expense of Vulnerable Children

Speak up loudly and stop this unjust proposal

BY MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN

I hope you will speak up loudly and do whatever else is necessary to stop Congress' hugely unjust Tax Cuts and Jobs Act that rewards billionaires at the expense of poor babies and corporations at the expense of vulnerable children. Millions of America's children today are suffering from hunger, homelessness and hopelessness. Nearly 13.2 million children are poor – almost one in five. About 70 percent of them are children of color who will be a majority of our children by 2020. More than 1.2 million are homeless. About 14.8 million children struggle against hunger in food insecure households.

Millions of young children need quality early childhood programs during their critical years of early brain development but only 5 percent of eligible infants and toddlers are



enrolled in Early Head Start and Head Start serves only 46 percent of eligible 3- and 4-year-olds.

The majority of all our public school fourth and eighth graders cannot read at grade level; over 70 percent of Latino and 80 percent of black children cannot read at grade level in fourth or eighth grades.

Every 47 seconds a child is abused or neglected and the number of children in foster care is increasing rapidly in some parts of our country from out-of-control opioid use.

And what are our callous and morally blind and money greedy political leaders doing to address grim child survival needs in our wealthy nation? Making it worse by seeking to enact tax cuts for billionaires and millionaires and powerful corporations, hugely increasing the national deficit, and imposing emasculating and deep cuts in essential lifegiving investments for children and families.

Both the House and Senate are working hard to move millions and millions of low- and middle-income children and families backwards and to line the pockets and fill the coffers of powerful special interests.

Congressional Republican claims that these massive tax cuts will help the middle class are lies. The Joint Congressional Committee on Taxation says more than two thirds of the nearly \$1.5 trillion cost of the House bill would go to the wealthiest families and businesses. Families with annual incomes under \$75,000 would (on average) see a tax increase in 10 years, while families making more than \$1 million would see a tax cut.

And more than three million low-income children, many U.S. citizens, in hard-working immigrant families currently benefitting from the Child Tax Credit will lose it entirely with the new requirement that all families file their income taxes with a Social Security Number rather than the Individual Taxpayer Identification Number many taxpaying immigrant families now use.

The House-approved bill also would eliminate a number of existing credits that currently help children and families at the bottom and in the middle of the income range. It ends tax credits or deductions for employers offering child care to working parents; high cost medical treatment for children

and adults with severe medical needs; reimbursement for public school teachers who purchase supplies for their classrooms out of their own pockets; student loan interest and other higher education assistance; and help to find jobs.

Charitable contributions that help service programs for vulnerable children and families will likely decrease as the percentage of taxpayers who itemize deductions is expected to decline because of changes in the House bill to eligibility for the standard deduction.

It gets worse. Senate Republicans use their tax bill to continue their cruel efforts to destroy the Affordable Care Act's individual mandate requiring most Americans to purchase health care or pay a penalty as they file their tax returns. This will "save" \$338 billion for the rich and leave millions of children and families without health insurance beginning in 2019 and 13 million children and adults without health insurance over the next 10 years while raising premiums for millions more.

The \$1.5 trillion ten-year deficit both House and Senate bills will allow will undermine the health and well-being of

millions of children and is just Part I of theft from the minds and bodies and spirits and hopes of children. In Part II we will see additional huge cuts in Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance, child care and Head Start, education, Pell grants, and other crucial child investments.

Although polls reflect public skepticism about these unjust tax cuts for the very non-needy rich, Congressional Republicans and the President are recklessly zooming full speed ahead. Every American who believes in fairness must stand up and stop their indefensible massive giveaways to the least needy and richest among us at the expense of the most needy and vulnerable young and old.

In his last Sunday sermon at Washington National Cathedral, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. warned that "America is going to hell if we don't use her vast resources to end poverty and make it possible for all of God's children to have the basic necessities of life."

If this horrifically unjust tax bill passes we will be well on our way there!

Marian Wright Edelman is president of the Children's Defense Fund.