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PRESIDENT OBAMA CALLS FOR CONGRESS TO ENSURE CUTS DON'T HARM MOST VULNERABLE CITIZENS

State of the Union address offers beginning of a cooperative spirit among lawmakers

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) January 27, 2011 – President Barack Obama issued a strong appeal to lawmakers in his State of the Union address to move into a new era of cooperation. Echoing this sentiment, members of Congress sat side by side with their colleagues from opposing parties at Tuesday's address rather than their tradition party divide on either aisle. In the same spirit, Congress and the president should join together to promote and preserve policies that serve children, youth and older adults mutually, because we're stronger together.

"Seeing our lawmakers put aside partisan differences – even for just that one night – gives us hope there can be a renewed spirit of cooperation to find solutions that will benefit all generations," said Generations United Executive Director Donna Butts. "We encourage them to continue to listen to each other, act in the best interest of young and old together, and remind them this is a family, not a fight."

President Obama addressed the fiscal challenges ahead and announced a five year freeze on domestic spending which could include painful cuts to services for many people. But he made clear his commitment to preserving protections for those who need it most by making sure we "are not doing it on the backs of our most vulnerable citizens."

We applaud the president's challenge to find a bipartisan solution to strengthen Social Security, "without putting at risk current retirees, the most vulnerable, or people with disabilities; without slashing benefits for future generations..." But this call should not overlook the critical role Social Security also plays in the lives of the 6.5 million children today that receive part of their family income from it.

Reiterating his commitment to education, the president noted if we want innovation to produce jobs in American then we must win the race to educate our children. "And so the question is whether all of us -- as citizens, and as parents -- are willing to do what's necessary to give every child a chance to succeed." Generations United supports early investments to provide every child with the opportunity to succeed. Further, we support engaging older adults to inspire children to pursue their dreams.

The president's call for a review of government regulations presents an opportunity to reduce barriers and streamline efficiency. Not only will this facilitate better communication and partnerships between government agencies, it will create opportunities for the government to work together to identify ways in which communities can deliver critical services to all generations. Further, it could pave a clearer path for intergenerational solutions like joint child and adult day care centers which ease the burden on the sandwich generation while improving seniors' mental health and children's social development.

President Obama's openness to improvements in the Affordable Care Act is laudable, as is his unwillingness to return to practices that allowed insurance companies to deny coverage to someone of any age because of a pre-existing condition. He affirmed making prescription drugs cheaper for senior citizens and giving uninsured students a chance to stay on their parents' coverage have been crucial facets of an important protection for families.

The president rightly declared "the future is ours to win." The path to that victory is paved with cooperation and intergenerational solutions to our nation's challenges. We urge Congress and the president to keep working together, because we are stronger together.