

For immediate release

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**New Data Finds 779,000 Washingtonians Lack Health Insurance
Poverty Decreases Marginally, Incomes Increase in 2006**

Vancouver, WA – Twelve-and-a-half percent of Washingtonians (779,000 individuals) did not have health insurance coverage in 2006, according to Census Bureau data released yesterday. Nationally, the number of uninsured rose from 44.8 million in 2005 to 47 million in 2006, including 8.66 million uninsured children, up from 8.05 million in 2005.

The health insurance numbers are of particular interest given the looming showdown between Congress and the President over children's health insurance. Despite American families' continued struggle to afford health insurance for their children, the President has vowed to veto the State Children's Health Insurance Program Congress passed this summer that would extend health insurance to millions of uninsured children.

The Census Bureau also released data on poverty and income trends in Washington.

The poverty rate of families and children living in the state of Washington edged down marginally to 8% and 14.8%, respectively, in 2006, while median income rose to \$52,583. The state of Washington remains worse off despite both of these measures than when the recession bottomed out in 2001. According to the Census Bureau, the total number of poor (36.5 million) is not considered statistically different from 2005.

"These figures demonstrate the need remains for a greater focus on poverty among leaders at both the federal and state level," said Diane Christie, Executive Director of Share. "Our lack of progress in substantially raising wages and reducing poverty shows that the benefits of the current economic recovery have not been broadly shared. Despite five years of economic growth, too many individuals and families locally, and throughout the state, are struggling to escape poverty or earn a decent wage."

As Congress heads back to Washington, the new data show that we face a number of challenges. Our leaders can take an immediate step to address one of these problems by agreeing on a plan to expand children's health insurance.

Share was founded in 1977 with the goal of caring for the homeless and hungry in the greater Vancouver area. Share operates four shelters for the homeless, a transitional housing program, case management programs, a street outreach program and provides daily meals for the homeless and low-income members of our community, as well as a summer lunch program for low-income children and a backpack program to provide food for weekends to children receiving free or reduced-fee lunches at 14 schools. For more information on Share, visit our Web site at www.sharevancouver.org.

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