

Spotlight on Poverty and Opportunity Project

- What:** A strategic initiative by foundations to focus public attention on poverty and opportunity during the 2008 Presidential campaign, in order to create a mandate for action by the new President and Congress in 2009.
- Goals:**
1. Persuade the 2008 presidential candidates – in both the primary and general elections – to provide detailed and substantive statements about how they, if elected, would reduce poverty in America and increase economic mobility among struggling low-income families.
 2. Elevate the issues of poverty and economic mobility in the primary and general election campaigns, making struggling low-income families a major issue in debates, media coverage, and campaign platforms.
 3. Generate and sustain a national discussion about poverty and opportunity that gives these issues high priority for the new President and Congress in 2009.
 4. Create a unified call by foundations to make the issue of poverty a national priority.
- Strategy:**
- July 2007 through Primaries: Presidential candidates invited to submit videotaped answers to five questions about issues of poverty and economic opportunity, which will then be posted on our website (www.spotlightonpoverty.org). The website will also contain objective data on poverty in the U.S. and links to opinion pieces from across the ideological spectrum. A bipartisan Advisory Council of respected national figures will call for substantive debates addressing the issue of poverty.
- General Election Campaign: The Spotlight Project will foster attention to the nominees' views on poverty and opportunity through various means including press conferences, op-ed placement, and targeted advertising. In addition, we will organize other opportunities to inspire media interest such as a candidate forum that coincides with the Council on Foundations meeting in May 2008.
- Post-Election Action: A communications campaign will stimulate public debate over policies and keep pressure on Congress and the new President to address poverty and economic opportunity as a high priority.
- Management:** The project is directed by a Steering Committee representing the Center for Law and Social Policy, The Hatcher Group, and the Annie E. Casey and Eos foundations, who have committed significant initial funds. Content for the www.spotlightonpoverty.org website will be developed by The Hatcher Group, by Freedman Consulting (for a Democratic perspective) and by Civic Enterprises (for a Republican perspective).
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The project is recruiting an Advisory Committee; former Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen, former Member of Congress Nancy L. Johnson, former member of Congress Jack Kemp, former Senator George Mitchell, and former Member of Congress Clay Shaw have already agreed to serve on this committee, as well as Ron Haskins, Senior Scholar and Co-director, Center on Children and Families, the Brookings Institution and Mark Greenberg, Executive Director, Task Force on Poverty Center for American Progress.

Opportunity: The baseline budget for the project is \$1,750,000, of which \$450,000 already has been committed. Additional funding up to a total of \$3,000,000 will allow the project to produce more events and disseminate information more broadly. Core funders may join the project Steering Committee or a funders' advisory committee that will respond at strategic points via group calls.

A detailed concept paper is available upon request.