



COALITION ON HUMAN NEEDS

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3.7 Million More Poor – A State of Emergency

*Coalition on Human Needs Calls For
Continuation of Successful Aid to Support Economic Recovery*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Deborah Weinstein, executive director of the Coalition on Human Needs, called today's Census Bureau report on record increases in poverty "nothing less than a national emergency. The Great Recession's severe joblessness has taken a toll on families, and will cause lasting harm to children and to our economic future if Congress does not act now to continue and expand successful anti-poverty aid."

Last year's 43.6 million poor people, including 15.4 million children, comprise the highest number of Americans living in poverty in the past 50 years. Overall, the number of Americans living in poverty increased by 3.7 million to 14.3 percent. By comparison, from 2007 to 2008 the number of people in poverty rose by 2.5 million.

Despite these dire numbers, poverty did not increase as much as some had predicted in large part due to help from economic recovery measures. This includes unemployment insurance and income from subsidized temporary jobs and cash assistance, all of which were expanded by the Obama Administration and Congress. "Without these benefits poverty among families would have been even harsher," noted Weinstein.

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities has calculated that unemployment benefits alone kept 3.3 million people out of poverty last year, helping much more than in the past due to federal expansions of the program. Food stamps and low-income tax credits are not counted in the official measure, but the Census Bureau estimates that if the recovery act expansions of these programs were counted, each would lift about 2 million people out of poverty. "The new poverty data show that work supports such as the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Emergency Fund, recent gains in the Child Tax Credit, Earned Income Tax Credit and food stamps remain urgently needed."

Weinstein pointed out that poverty for a family of four in 2009 meant trying to provide children with a roof over their heads, adequate health care and a nutritious diet on an annual income of less than \$21,947. Average poor families live on far less, with incomes that are \$9,042 below the poverty line.

Weinstein called the large increase in poverty "deeply disturbing, particularly given that most projections suggest that without federal action current poverty levels may not drop substantially for a decade. Congress must act this month to help parents get back to work and invest in children's capacity to learn and thrive. The right thing to do is also the practical thing to do."

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The Coalition on Human Needs (CHN) is an alliance of national organizations working together to promote public policies which address the needs of low-income and other vulnerable people. The Coalition conducts analyses of federal budget proposals and policies to determine their impact on people in need. The Coalition's members include civil rights, religious, labor and professional organizations and those concerned with the well being of children, women, the elderly and people with disabilities. CHN is located at 1120 Connecticut Ave. NW Suite 312, Washington, D.C. 20036. For more information please visit www.chn.org.