



COALITION ON HUMAN NEEDS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 28, 2010

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Statement of Deborah Weinstein, executive director of the Coalition on Human Needs, on President Obama's Address to Congress

WASHINGTON, D.C. – We applaud the President for recognizing the economic devastation caused by the recession, particularly to families whose wages have shrunk even before the recession. We are pleased that he clearly articulated the need for the federal government to play an active role to spur and shape economic growth.

We also applaud his vision of quality affordable health care for every American and call for swift progress to achieve that goal. We are close to accomplishing this goal, and it would be unconscionable for Congress to walk away from it.

We are pleased that President Obama called for public investment in jobs and education. With hard choices facing the nation, the President's continued pledge to end the Bush tax breaks for the wealthy, corporations that ship jobs overseas, and hedge-fund managers is extremely important.

It is not yet clear whether his budget choices are the most effective means of creating jobs and expanding the middle class. Investments in education and child care are badly needed. But it's unclear that the President will propose adequate investments for jobs targeted to rebuild the most devastated communities and on-the-job training for the poor and unskilled. The President did not talk about the damage to families and the economy created by the severe state budget cuts. If aid to states is not extended, the loss of services and jobs will get even worse. His proposed freeze on domestic spending may preclude the supports vulnerable people need to be part of the economic growth the President seeks. At the same time, exempting military spending from the freeze may mean some wasteful programs continue to be funded. We will look at the President's budget next week to judge whether it meets vulnerable people's needs.

Deborah Weinstein is also available for comments and analysis following the release of the President's budget on Monday, February 1.

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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 populations. 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