



P. O. Box 1188
Montgomery, AL 36101
Street address: 207 Montgomery St. #810
www.arisecitizens.org

Calendar notes

We're holding listening sessions and cluster meetings around the state throughout the summer. Please join us at one of the following:

Listening sessions

Birmingham 9:15 am Sun Aug 1,
Cahaba Heights United Methodist.

Birmingham 12 noon Sun Aug 1,
Unitarian Universalist Church.

Pine Apple 6:30 pm Th Aug 19,
Pine Apple Clinic.

Guntersville 6:30 pm Th Sept 9,
location TBA.

Cluster meetings

Quad Cities 7 pm Tu Sept 14,
location TBA.

Tuscaloosa 6:30 pm Th Sept 16,
location TBA.

Auburn 12-1 pm Tu, Sept 21,
Auburn Unitarian-Universalist
Fellowship Busch Center.

**Annual meeting
returns to Sept.
this year!**

**Saturday, Sept. 11
9:30-3:00**

St. Stephen's
Episcopal Church
3775 Crosshaven Dr.
Birmingham
(205) 967-8786

Report

This newsletter made possible by the Unitarian Universalist Vetch Program at Shelter Rock
Vol. 7, No. 5

July 16, 2004

Drastic cuts proposed

Arise joins effort to save Section 8

The Bush administration's 2005 budget proposal would drastically alter the Section 8 housing program, cutting more than \$1.6 billion in that fiscal year, with future reductions rising to \$4.6 billion by 2009. If enacted, these changes would amount to the deepest cuts in low-income programs since the early days of the Reagan administration.

According to the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, the plan would reduce the number of families receiving housing assistance by 250,000.

**Action:
Contact Alabama's U.S. senators and representatives and urge them to oppose cuts to Section 8. You'll find their contact information at the "Legislation" link on www.alarise.org.**

In Alabama, 28,458 low-income households receive Section 8 benefits.

Assuming that the proposed reductions are distributed proportionately among states, 3,449 of these families would lose this assistance in 2005. Under the proposal, that number would more than double to 8,278 by 2009.

This major policy shift would use the poorest of our neighbors to offset the rising federal deficit, while our leaders consider further tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans. Alabama Arise has joined with the National Coalition to Save Section 8 in calling on Congress to reject the administration's proposals and ensure that the Section 8 Voucher Program continues to support those families in greatest need. We encourage you to contact members of the Alabama delegation and urge that this critically needed housing

program be maintained at its current level.

Since its inception in 1974, the Housing Choice Voucher Program, commonly known as Section 8, has provided safe and adequate housing for millions of low-income households, seniors and people with disabilities.

Section 8 currently serves about 2 million households. Administered by public housing authorities across the nation, the

program provides a subsidy to make up the difference between the fair market rental value of housing and the amount paid directly by tenants, usually set at 30 percent of their adjusted income.

In addition to reducing federal dollars for the program, the administration proposes sweeping programmatic changes:

- **Funding will change from a unit-based to a dollar-based system.** Currently, Washington allocates a specific number of vouchers to the program, and the local cost of housing determines the dollars appropriated. Administrative costs are covered separately. Under the proposal, dollars would be distributed to the

[Continued on Page 2]

A few words from Kimble —

I've been working on our budget for the year that began July 1. It was hard to sort out which expenses were one-time costs in the tax reform campaign. Also, we've reached the end of two long-term grants. For the new year, ACPP and Alabama Arise need \$100,000 in new grant funding and \$25,000 in additional member giving. This year, member giving reached about \$94,000; we believe we can pass that \$100,000 milestone!

We're also working to cut costs. We can save nearly \$14,000, for example, if we reduce the mailing list for our monthly newsletter. From now on, we'll mail to the full list of 4,200 three times a year, but the regular mailings will go only to our 1,200 "associate members"; that is, to people who take one of these steps:

- Sign up at the website for our e-mail alerts.
- Report that they have written or called a policymaker this year.
- Contribute financially.
- Attend Lobby Day or a meeting with a lawmaker.

We're delighted to have 1,200 folks on our "active" roll. And we aim to increase that number by strengthening our network.

I just came back from a national meeting that had highs and lows. It was alarming to hear the projections for budget deficits in 2040 if health care inflation continues (see "Long-term Deficit" on our website). It was reassuring to learn that Arise ranks well among our peers in other states in the funders' evaluations. And what ranks highest is the level of involvement of you, our members. Way to go!

With peace,

Section 8 cuts

[Continued from Page 1]

public housing authorities in block grants of fixed amounts. Funds necessary for administration of the program would have to come from these allocations, thus reducing the funding available for vouchers. A further concern is the fact that, under block grants, rising costs typically result in program cuts.

- **The proposal will do away with participant protections.** The current requirement that 75 percent of new vouchers go to people with the most serious housing problems would be repealed. The rule that limits the tenant's portion of rent to no more than 30 percent of adjusted income would be eliminated.
- **Vouchers would no longer be portable.** Under existing rules, tenants may move to neighboring areas that offer more jobs and better living conditions. One of the major benefits of the existing program has been to encourage the racial integration of neighborhoods by allowing participants to move from areas of limited opportunity. Under the proposal, families would be prohibited from moving outside of the issuing public housing authority's jurisdiction in the first year of assistance.

— Ron Gilbert, policy analyst

Housing and transportation issue caucuses re-forming

Arise issue caucuses bring together activists, staff and others to discuss shared concerns and plan strategies for addressing them. Before scheduling meetings of the housing and transportation caucuses in the coming weeks, policy analyst Ron Gilbert invites anyone interested in participating to contact him at (800) 832-9060 or ron@alarise.org.

Medicaid to host town hall meetings statewide

Alabama Medicaid plans to hold 11 "town hall" meetings around the state to explain the current status of the program and to review recently implemented policy changes. Billed as "Prescription for Health: Finding Remedies for Medicaid," the meetings are aimed at the provider community, but interested citizens and advocates are urged to attend.

At each regional session, Medicaid Commissioner Carol Herrmann will outline recent pharmacy changes and Medicaid's re-structured Patient 1st program. One of the objectives of the meetings is to enhance attendees' understanding of the agency's medical and economic impact on the state and on local communities.

Commissioner Herrmann believes Medicaid funding is one of the most critical issues facing our state, and Alabama Arise agrees. Citing recent and projected budget shortfalls, she predicts that Medicaid will be at the "forefront of the debate among state leaders as we struggle to make compassionate but fiscally responsible decisions regarding our state's budget."

The 4-hour meetings will be held in the following cities:

Tuscaloosa – Aug 24, 10:30 am
Dothan – Aug 25, 10:30 am
Alex City – Aug 27, 10:30 am
Florence/Sheffield – Aug 30, 1:30 pm
Huntsville – Aug 31, 8:30 am
Gadsden – Sept 1, 8:30 am
Montgomery – Sept 7, 8:30 am
Mobile – Sept 8, 1:30 pm
Phenix City – Sept 10, 10:30 am
Demopolis – Sept 14, 10:30 am
Birmingham – Sept 15, 10:30 am

For details about the town hall meeting nearest you, visit Medicaid's website at www.medicaid.state.al.us and click on "Providers."

— Mary Weidler, policy analyst