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Bulletin Board

ACPP MOVIE BENEFIT

Birmingham Fri., Jan. 11, 6:30 pm reception, 7 pm screening of *Sicko*, Michael Moore's new documentary on the health care crisis. Church of the Reconciler, 112 14th St. N. *Free admission, tax-deductible donations to ACPP welcome!*

CLUSTER MEETING

Auburn Th., Jan. 17, Noon – 1 pm, UU Busch Center.

STATE TOWN HALL MEETING

Birmingham Sat., April 5, time TBA, 16th Street Baptist Church, statewide gathering to develop a "working family agenda" and to highlight those issues in the election year. *U.S. Rep. Artur Davis will be the keynote speaker. Mark your calendar early and plan to attend!*

HOLIDAY CARDS

You can make a tax-deductible gift to ACPP in honor of a friend or loved one this season with our new holiday cards. Send your check to Brenda Boman with the name and address of each honoree by Dec. 18, and she'll do the rest!

CORRECTION

The ACPP Annual Report 2006-07 contained an error in a reference to the South Bay Communities Alliance. The ACPP member group was founded in March 2006 by Coden residents who lost their homes to Hurricane Katrina.

Report

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December 5, 2007

Budget struggle looms

Lawmakers study Medicaid costs

For the second time this fall, a joint legislative committee on Medicaid oversight met Nov. 28 to question Commissioner Carol Steckel about the impact of federal accounting changes and loss of Katrina money on next year's Alabama Medicaid budget. Both times, Steckel declined to provide projections, prompting several committee members to express their frustration. However, Sen. Parker Griffith (D-Huntsville) praised Steckel and suggested Gov. Bob Riley was holding back on the numbers because he doesn't know where the additional money will come from.

In the second meeting, Steckel presented a detailed explanation of the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP), the formula that determines the rate of federal matching funds for state

Medicaid expenditures. She pointed out, with more of an advocacy message than she usually conveys, that the current formula leaves low-income Alabamians with fewer federal dollars than the national average. She attributed the inequity to the formula's lower limit of 50 percent federal funding, which gives wealthy states an artificially higher share of Medicaid dollars.

Joining the meeting was U.S. Rep. Artur Davis, who challenged lawmakers to think more broadly and more boldly about the health coverage issue. He noted that the problem has mounted through neglect by a whole generation of leaders of both parties.

"We hope it won't take another generation to solve the problem," ACPP executive director Kimble Forrister told the committee.

New report to examine Alabama's prosperity gap

ACPP has completed a major study on the obstacles and opportunities facing low-income working families in Alabama's growing economy. The report, titled *Bridging the Gap*, is part of the national Working Poor Families Project. To mark the report's release in mid-January, ACPP will host a State House policy forum where lawmakers, other state officials and journalists will discuss the findings and recommendations.

***Bridging the Gap* examines three major dimensions** of low-income working life: basic educational skills necessary for jobs that support families;

the availability of job opportunities that offer the potential for higher earnings; and the extent and quality of workforce supports that promote self-sufficiency.

"Despite much-publicized recent gains," said ACPP senior policy analyst Ron Gilbert, principal author of the report, "many of our working neighbors are struggling to get by. We want to highlight pro-family state policies that will ensure opportunities for advancement across the entire workforce."

***Bridging the Gap* will be available at arisecitizens.org** in early 2008.

A few words from Kimble –

Every November we get a preview of emerging tax and budget issues at a conference in D.C. This year Center on Budget & Policy Priorities director Bob Greenstein talked about strategies to address climate change and projected costs for low-income people. Under a cap-and-trade system, low-income people may pay \$750 to \$950 more a year, which could be offset if we devote about 14% of the total system revenues to low-income relief. CBPP and groups like NRDC are discussing how to “get the low-income provisions right” so they benefit all low-income people. (See “Climate Change” at cbpp.org.)

We’re testing new message frames on tax and budget issues. With a communications grant from the Ford Foundation, we were trained by Demos and we contracted with Topos to lead focus groups to test message frames. Now we’re trying to ground any tax reform talk in the notion of government and taxes as ways to improve our quality of life. We’re seeing how folks respond if we talk about the *imbalances*: Since our tax system hasn’t kept up with inflation, it’s all out of whack. A \$300-per-child deduction made sense in 1935, but is outmoded today.

We continue to press Sen. Richard Shelby on Katrina relief. He has not yet endorsed the proposed legislation, nor negotiated funding for Alabama victims. If you’re on our listserv you get frequent updates. If you don’t get the updates, sign up at alarise.org by clicking “Join the Arise discussion group today!”

Thanks to the members who have helped with the House Task Force on Poverty. We had our third meeting today, and it seemed like half the crowd were Arise members. The subcommittee meetings are a rare opportunity to sit around a table with lawmakers to talk over policy ideas. Our next meetings will be January 15 & 29. And please mark your 2008 calendar to join hundreds of us on April 5 and thousands on August 30 to craft a “working family agenda.”

Yours in peace and hope,

We’re thankful for our contributors!

Your year-end support provides needed funds for research and education in the months leading up to the legislative session and secures funding for frequent updates once the session begins. Our challenge is to raise \$40,000 by Dec. 31 that will be matched by \$50,000 grants from the Ford Foundation and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. ACPP thanks the following for their gifts between Sept. 22 and Nov. 14, 2007, that have put us closer to that goal:

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Tuscaloosa
St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church, Florence
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Peggy Babunovic, Huntsville
Carolyn Barham, Birmingham
Sr. Patricia Bauch, O.P., Tuscaloosa
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*In memory of Joe Deegan:
Jeanne Weaver, Birmingham*