



Seizing the Moment

STATE GOVERNMENTS and THE NEW COMMITMENT TO REDUCE POVERTY IN AMERICA

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The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) is a national nonprofit that works to improve the lives of low-income people. CLASP's mission is to improve the economic security, educational and workforce prospects, and family stability of low-income parents, children, and youth and to secure equal justice for all.

CLASP has played a key role in the re-emergence of poverty and opportunity in recent public discourse. In 2006 CLASP published "Targeting Poverty: Taking Aim at A Bull's Eye" which telescoped the potential for a new political climate toward those struggling to make ends meet. In addition to tracking developments around the nation, CLASP provides technical assistance related to raising the political profile of poverty and opportunity. Look for CLASP audio conferences and issue briefs on a range of topics such as: Poverty-Reduction Targets: What State Legislators Aim to Do; Poverty Ruler: Toward a Better Measurement Tool; Target Practice: Lessons from Targets that Hit at Air Quality and Homelessness; Developed Nation: What and Why Poverty Targets are Policy in Ireland, Canada, France, the UK and More.

Please contact Jodie Levin-Epstein at jodie@clasp.org for the schedule of audio conferences and to share developments in your community or state.

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Spotlight on Poverty and Opportunity: Foundations Ask Presidential Candidates What They'll Do for America is a new initiative supported by American foundations to develop sustained political will on the pressing issues of poverty and opportunity. *Spotlight* starts by engaging candidates in substantive discussions about poverty in our country and eliciting ideas and perspectives about what must be done. The *Spotlight* Web site offers the latest research and news from around the country and features compelling commentary from leading public figures and experts. Through ongoing forums, discussions, and outreach, *Spotlight* will seek to ensure that poverty and opportunity are on the national agenda long after the elections are over. For more information, visit www.spotlightonpoverty.org.

State Initiative Charts

Notes:

- ◆ Charts will be updated as states make additional recommendations.
- ◆ Recommendations may or may not have been considered or acted upon.
- ◆ Recommendations should be used as a reference tool to identify which policies have gained attention where; the absence of a recommendation in a given state does not indicate disinterest in that area (e.g., a state may not have a recommendation to expand EITC not because it is disinterested in EITC but because it already accomplished a major expansion.)
- ◆ Categories used to track state recommendations here are identical to those used to track national organization reports at: <http://www.affirmativeoptions.org>

State Initiatives: Overview and Links

States	Initiative (Year Established)	Poverty Target	Report Links and Status
Alabama	House Task Force on Poverty (2007)		Report — 2008 Creation of a permanent, bipartisan commission on the Reduction of Poverty is recommended by the Poverty Task Force.
Colorado	Common Good Caucus (2007)		The 2008 goal of the bicameral, bipartisan caucus is to develop a 2009 agenda.
Connecticut	Child Poverty Council (2004) merged into the Child Poverty and Prevention Council (2006)	CHILD POVERTY Cut 50% by 2014	Progress Report — Jan. 2008 Expert Panel Recommendations — Dec. 2007 Progress Report — Jan. 2007 Agency Prevention Report — Jan. 2007 Progress Report — Jan. 2006 Initial Plan — Jan. 2005
Delaware	Child Poverty Task Force (2007)	CHILD POVERTY Cut 50% by 2017	A 10-year-plan is due to the governor in 2008.
District of Columbia	D.C. Poverty Commission (2006)		Commissioners are being appointed; the 2008 sunset date will likely be extended.
Iowa	Successful Families Caucus (2007)		Initiated by a bipartisan team of four legislators, the caucus is now made up of one-fifth of the General Assembly. Legislation is pending.
Michigan	First poverty summit sponsored by state (2008)		Leading up to the summit, scheduled for November 2008, the Michigan Commission on Community Action and Economic Opportunity will hold six forums across the state.
Minnesota	Legislative Commission to End Poverty in Minnesota by 2020 (2006)	OVERALL POVERTY "End" poverty by 2020	Recommendations are due December 15, 2008. The commission has held nine regional meetings. The legislature appropriated \$250,000 for the commission's three year operation.
Oregon	Oregon Progress Board (1989) Independent executive agency; created by legislature	OVERALL POVERTY Drop the rate of poverty from 12.1% to no more than 10% by 2010	The Oregon Progress Board set 91 benchmarks that measure progress on a range of issues, including poverty. That benchmark calls for a drop in the rate of poverty, which, if achieved, would represent a cut in poverty of nearly 17 percent within six years.
Rhode Island	Commission on Family Income and Asset-Building (2007)		Report and recommendations due June 2008.
Vermont	Child Poverty Council (2007)	CHILD POVERTY Cut 50% by 2017	Report and recommendations due soon.
Washington	Poverty Advisory Committee (2006) Committee created by executive agency		Report — 2007
P E N D I N G I N I T I A T I V E S			
Alabama	Pending: Permanent Commission on the Reduction of Poverty		If enacted, the bicameral commission would report annually to the legislature regarding its evaluation of current and proposed policy. Operational funds would be appropriated.
Illinois	Pending: Commission on Poverty Eradication (2008)	EXTREME POVERTY Cut 50% by 2015	If enacted, the commission would issue an interim report and recommendations by March 1, 2009.
Louisiana	Pending: Child Poverty Prevention Fund, implemented by a Child Poverty Prevention Council (2008)	CHILD POVERTY Cut 50% by 2018	If enacted, the Child Poverty Prevention Council would oversee a fund aimed at halving child poverty and would give grants directly to parishes, focusing on those with high poverty rates. The council would be housed within the Department of Social Services and would include representatives from six state departments.
Maine	Pending: Council on Poverty and Economic Security (2007)	If established, council may set targets for the elimination of poverty.	If enacted, the council would meet at least annually to develop recommendations and would report to the governor and the legislature every two years.

State Initiatives: Checklist of Recommendations

TOPIC	Income & Assets <i>e.g.</i>	Adult Education & Employment <i>e.g.</i>	Child Education & Child Care <i>e.g.</i>	Work Supports & Safety Net <i>e.g.</i>	Housing & Health <i>e.g.</i>	Family Structure <i>e.g.</i>	Links to Reports; Notes <i>e.g.</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wages • Taxes • Predatory Lending • Independent Development Accounts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postsecondary • Infrastructure • Prisoner Reentry • Workforce Investment Act • Employer Incentives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Childhood Education • K-12 • Child Care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unemployment Insurance • TANF • Transportation • 211 Social Services Directory • Public Benefits “Cliffs” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transitional Housing • Rental Subsidies • Mental Health • Insurance Rates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teen Pregnancy Reduction • Home-Visiting • Fatherhood Initiatives • Couples/Marriage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty Measure
STATE:							
Alabama	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	<p>Report — 2008 The Poverty Task Force also recommended the creation of a bipartisan permanent formal commission on the Reduction of Poverty and a report for the legislature that offers an overall needs assessment.</p>
Connecticut	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	<p>Child Poverty Council Report — 2005 The council’s initial plan lists 67 recommendations. While a subcommittee identified six top priorities, the report includes the full list.</p> <p>Expert Panel Recommendations — 2007 The expert panel prioritized the 67 recommendations, highlighting 13 most likely to reduce child poverty in the short term. Among those recommendations:</p> <p>Evaluate effectiveness of the implementation of the council’s recommendations.</p> <p>Provide low-income individuals with an expectation of success regarding possibilities and techniques for achievement.</p> <p>Increase ESL programming. Enhance availability of transportation.</p>
Iowa	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Washington		✓		✓		✓	<p>Report — 2008 The Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development strives to educate residents about the complexity of poverty issues through education, community, and business contacts. CTED hosted forums across the state which had nearly 500 participants.</p>

Recommendations Detailed by Policy Area: Income & Assets

Alabama	<p>Require businesses that receive economic incentives pay a wage equal to the area median-income level.</p> <p>Encourage the promotion of the EITC for low-income workers.</p> <p>Raise the income-tax threshold to the poverty level.</p> <p>Eliminate sales tax on groceries/food.</p> <p>Exempt thrift stores on military bases from sales tax.</p> <p>Regulate the interest rate of payday- and title-loan companies.</p> <p>Enable and fund IDAs to match savings for low-income families. The savings can be used to purchase a home, finance higher education, or start a business.</p>
Connecticut	<p>Expand property-tax rebates to include low-income families raising children.</p> <p>Create dependent exemptions against state income tax.</p> <p>Charge higher income-tax rates for highest earners.</p> <p>Dedicate part of community college graduates' income tax to community college system through "check off" box on income-tax forms.</p> <p>Provide payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) for group homes.</p> <p>Refundable state EITC.</p> <p>EITC outreach.</p> <p>Create child-care and/or child-education credit that phases out as household income increases and is at least partially refundable</p> <p>Curb predatory lending (limit interest rates and ban negative amortization.)</p> <p>Strengthen state's IDA program and make available to all working families.</p> <p>Encourage low-income individuals to bank and accumulate assets.</p> <p>Encourage entrepreneurship.</p> <p>Expand second-mortgage pool.</p>
Connecticut <i>Expert Panel Recommendations</i>	<p>Refundable state EITC.</p> <p>EITC outreach.</p>
Iowa	<p>Offer financial consumer protection.</p> <p>Secure EITC increase from 7 to 10 percent of federal EITC.</p>
Washington	<p>Assist state, public, and private programs that encourage financial-literacy education and asset-building programs for low-income residents.</p>

Recommendations Detailed by Policy Area: Adult Education & Employment

Alabama	Require workforce development programs funded by the state to have low-income population/area recruitment goals.
Connecticut	<p>Enhance parents' educational attainment, skills, and employment opportunities.</p> <p>Increase low-income parents' access to literacy, postsecondary, and vocational education.</p> <p>Enhance literacy programs for adults including Adult Basic Education (ABE) and GED services.</p> <p>Increase vocational training opportunities for populations that do not have high school diplomas or have limited English proficiency.</p> <p>Provide assistance with vocational and postsecondary education expenses (tuition, books, supplies, child care, transportation, tools, or license fees).</p> <p>Provide subsidies for low-income individuals to attend community college, e.g. through means-tested tuition relief.</p> <p>Spend higher proportion of TFA funds on job training and education.</p> <p>Create state-funded work-study programs to supplement federal work-study programs.</p> <p>Provide additional incentives for businesses to locate in areas accessible to low-income individuals.</p> <p>Link training to industries and encourage training programs to develop curricula to meet workforce-shortage and high-growth employment areas.</p> <p>Provide resources to the Workforce Investment Boards and strengthen the employer-service component of the CTWorks centers as a "one-stop" for services that employers need.</p> <p>Provide public jobs programs by increasing participation in Hiring Incentive Tax Credit program, available to companies that hire recipients of the TFA program.</p>
Connecticut <i>Expert Panel Recommendations</i>	Increase cash assistance and other forms of support for postsecondary education, including community college, vocational education, and ESL.
Iowa	Develop workforce strategies that improve outreach, referral, and collaboration among and by agency partners at the state and local levels.

Recommendations Detailed by Policy Area: Child Education & Child Care

Alabama	<p>Provide additional funds to Head Start, until there is no waiting list.</p> <p>As funds are available, condition approvals of “First Class” pre-K with two recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funds should target low-income communities. • Monthly co-pay for low-income families should be reduced.
Connecticut	<p>Provide “education through birth”: support school-readiness and early childhood education.</p> <p>Create one coordinated system for early childhood education.</p> <p>Provide comprehensive early childhood education programs with mandated parent involvement.</p> <p>Enhance preschool teacher training (including on-site consultation for preschool teachers) to encourage earning advanced degrees.</p> <p>Amend preschool system to allow full-day, full-year (or school-day, school-year) programming.</p> <p>Advocate for year-round school programming for grades K-3 in low-income districts.</p> <p>Expand, enhance, and subsidize after-school programming.</p> <p>Shift Educational Cost-Sharing formula to provide more resources in certain municipalities.</p> <p>Develop incentives to recruit and retain qualified teachers to work in low-income school districts.</p> <p>Enhance drop-out prevention efforts.</p> <p><i>Re: Care4Kids:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase child-care subsidy to more closely match current market costs. • Increase number of child-care certificates. • Expand facilities for child care. • Expand child-care eligibility to cover those in education or job training programs. <p>Enhance training of child-care workers.</p> <p>Ensure adequate wages and benefits for child-care workers.</p> <p>Subsidize parents to stay home and care for children.</p>
Connecticut <i>Expert Panel Recommendations</i>	<p>Amend preschool system to allow full-day, full-year (or school-day, school-year) preschool.</p> <p>Advocate for year-round school programming for grades K-3.</p> <p>Enhance drop-out prevention efforts.</p> <p>Develop incentives to recruit and retain qualified teachers to work in low-income school districts.</p> <p>Make child-care subsidies available to all low-income families, up to 200 percent of poverty.</p>
Iowa	<p>Provide K-12 comprehensive financial literacy.</p>

Recommendations Detailed by Policy Area: Work Supports & Safety Net

Alabama	<p>Supportive of a 211 comprehensive directory of services that would be available to all.</p>
Connecticut	<p>Allow postsecondary education and vocational training to count toward the federal work participation requirement under the Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) program.</p> <p><i>Re: Jobs First Employment Services (JFES):</i> Comprehensive up-front assessment of barriers to employment to quickly identify fragile/high-barrier populations.</p> <p>Assessing each JFES participant to determine reason for lack of skills; develop individualized plans to remove barriers to employment (and if not possible within 21 months, classify participant as exempt from JFES work requirement and TFA time limits).</p> <p>Provide intensive case-management to identify ways to reduce barriers to employment for families with extreme barriers.</p> <p>Enhance level of financial support for families with extreme barriers to employment by increasing cash-assistance levels until parents can bring in more earnings.</p> <p>Create child-only grant for children whose parents have died or are incapacitated; and those in the care of a grandparent.</p> <p>Rethink 21-month time limit in TFA.</p> <p>Improve Food-Stamp participation rates.</p> <p>Enhance Unemployment Insurance (UI) for those who have been laid off.</p> <p>Extend UI benefit period.</p> <p>Increase UI benefits.</p> <p>Create additional “good cause” exemptions to voluntary quit provisions.</p> <p>Expand UI eligibility for benefits to part-time workers.</p> <p>Ensure culturally competent case-management services.</p> <p>Undertake study to identify eligibility “cliffs” in state’s various assistance programs.</p> <p>Develop recommendations regarding most effective and economically-efficient ways to provide supplemental assistance to support families’ journeys to economic self-sufficiency.</p>
Connecticut <i>Expert Panel Recommendations</i>	<p>Provide intensive case management to identify ways and reduce barriers to employment for families with extreme barriers.</p> <p>Improve Food-Stamp participation rates.</p> <p>Amend state welfare programs so parents receiving welfare benefits, especially TANF, Food Stamps, Medicaid, and housing, don’t abruptly lose benefits.</p> <p>Increase uptake among eligible families in Food Stamps, child nutrition, WIC, SSI, energy assistance, and other programs providing income support.</p> <p>Help high-risk populations with multiple barriers and most difficulty sustaining employment.</p>
Washington	<p>Coordinate state programs providing food to meet low-income nutritional needs.</p> <p>Statewide implementation of 211 social-services telephone referral system.</p> <p>Combine and consolidate reporting, monitoring, and auditing between government agencies and agency departments.</p>

Recommendations Detailed by Policy Area: Housing & Health

Alabama	<p>Create Affordable Housing Trust Fund Task Force charged with developing comprehensive recommendation to legislature on a housing trust fund prior to its 2009 Session.</p> <p>Reduce the time municipalities have to wait to demolish or sell abandoned or destroyed houses.</p> <p>Develop a current study of housing needs and conduct an analysis on findings focusing on low-income individuals and families.</p> <p>Ensure that medical providers do not charge those without insurance more than Medicaid patients or other insured groups.</p>
Connecticut	<p>Increase shelters and transitional living options for people discharged from inpatient behavioral-health treatment facilities.</p> <p>Expand availability of state rental assistance subsidies.</p> <p>Expand Transitional Rental Assistance Program (T-RAP) to allow families to remain eligible for longer period of time.</p> <p>Expand availability of affordable, family-sized housing units.</p> <p>Provide incentives to housing developers to develop family-sized units.</p> <p>Create Housing Trust Fund.</p> <p>Expand supportive housing for families.</p> <p>Expand use of Low-Income Housing Tax Credits to help finance housing and rehabilitation efforts.</p> <p>Enforce laws ensuring non-discrimination based on rent source.</p> <p>Encourage programs that facilitate homeownership, especially in central cities and among minorities.</p> <p>Ensure public or private health-insurance coverage for parents.</p> <p>Provide tax incentives to small businesses that offer health insurance to employees and their dependents.</p> <p>Allow uninsured parents to buy into state employee health insurance plan.</p> <p>Reduce medical expenses by expanding HUSKY to cover uninsured parents and relative caregivers of all HUSKY-eligible children with premiums increasing as family income increases up to 300 percent of the federal poverty level.</p> <p>Restore presumptive and continuous eligibility provisions under HUSKY.</p> <p>Enhance mechanism to provide information about employer-sponsored health insurance coverage for TFA participants transitioning off cash assistance.</p> <p>Advocate for universal health insurance for families of children living in poverty.</p> <p>Ensure access to sufficient number of health-care providers in the community and timely appointments.</p> <p>Strengthen health-care coordination and outreach.</p> <p>Enhance prevention and early-intervention programs.</p> <p>Increase education about preventing disease and accessing disease-prevention services, <i>e.g.</i>, diabetes, obesity.</p> <p>Provide immunizations for all children.</p> <p>Increase early identification and accessible, culturally appropriate health-promotion and health-care services for all families, especially families with a parent or child with mental illness or substance abuse problems.</p> <p>Enhance medical and behavioral health-care availability for families with special needs.</p> <p>Strengthen care for children with special health-care needs through transitional programs and medical home model through the DPH.</p> <p>Expand availability of behavioral health inpatient- and outpatient-treatment services.</p>
Connecticut <i>Expert Panel Recommendations</i>	<p>Expand availability of state rental-assistance subsidies.</p> <p>Ensure all parents and children receive health care for which they're eligible.</p> <p>Expand health coverage to non-parental caretakers with whom children reside.</p>
Iowa	<p>Provide health care coverage for all children through either public or private insurers.</p>
Washington	<p>Increase low-income/affordable-housing projects and programs.</p> <p>Help homeless and transitional-housing seekers.</p> <p>Expand dental care for low-income adults and children.</p> <p>Increase access to health and mental-health care.</p>

Recommendations Detailed by Policy Area: Family Structure

<p>Connecticut</p>	<p>Provide family planning and decrease teen pregnancy.</p> <p>Provide culturally competent newborn-to-5 home visiting, medical, and social services.</p> <p>Enhance fatherhood initiatives and child-support enforcement.</p> <p>Increase economic opportunity for men to increase marriage rates.</p> <p>Create stable, two-parent homes with two earners.</p> <p>Establish and maintain infrastructure to support young at-risk families through early intervention.</p>
<p>Connecticut <i>Expert Panel Recommendations</i></p>	<p>Remove marriage penalties.</p> <p>Prevent teen pregnancies.</p> <p>Programs should be adopted to help males complete high school and transition into the labor force.</p> <p>Policies that increase work incentives (e.g., wage subsidies) should also be considered.</p>