



Da DAWG says...

CENSUS BUREAU SHOWS GROWING POVERTY, DECLINING HEALTH COVERAGE, AND STATIC INCOMES NATIONWIDE IN 2004

~ Rick Wilson, American Friends Service Committee WV Economic Justice Project

The Census Bureau reported on August 30 that poverty in the United States rose in the 2004 from the previous year. Some 37 million Americans live in poverty, or 12.7 percent of the population. **Poverty increased by 1.1 million** despite the fact that 2004 marked the third year of economic growth since the official end of the 2001 recession. The number of people in poverty has swelled by 5.4 million since 2000, the last year before the downturn.

The Census Bureau also reported that the proportion of Americans lacking health insurance showed no improvement in 2004, while the number of the uninsured increased by 800,000 to 45.8 million. Employer-provided coverage fell in 2004, a trend that has continued since 2000. The proportion of Americans lacking coverage would have increased were it not for public health insurance programs such as Medicaid and CHIP that filled in the increasing gaps left by declines in employer-provided coverage.

The new Census data also showed no economic progress for the middle class and particularly bad news for workers. Nationwide, median household income has been static since 2002, while the median earnings of full-time, year-round workers *declined*.

WEST VIRGINIA DATA

West Virginia continues to “enjoy” the **lowest household median income in the nation**, with a 2002-2004 average of \$32,589, lower than but statistically tied with Arkansas and Mississippi. The two year average, however showed an increase, rising from \$32,241 in 2002-2003 to \$33,465 in 2003-2004. The three year 2002-2004 **poverty rate** was 16.1 percent, **sixth highest in the nation**. The two year average poverty rate for the state declined to 15.8 percent in 2003-2004 compared to 17.1 for 2002-2003. This is

still well above the national poverty rate and 2.5 percent above 1999-2000 state average. The percentage of **uninsured West Virginians increased** from 15.6 in 2002-2003 to 16.5 percent in 2003-2004. The national average is 15.7 percent.

POLICY CONCLUSIONS

The new data demonstrate the need for public programs like food stamps and Medicaid, which help low-income working families meet basic needs. Unfortunately, when Congress reconvenes next week, work will begin on bills to cut these two vital programs. Congress also plans to take up additional legislation this fall that will provide more tax breaks for the wealthy, including dramatically reducing or eliminating the taxes paid on multi-million dollar estates.

These actions are likely only to widen the gap between the rich and everyone else, as is evident in data showing that fully one-half of all income goes to the top one-fifth of American households. In these critical next few weeks, **West Virginia’s congressional delegation should take heed of the new Census findings and play a leadership role in preventing deep cuts to programs that support vulnerable West Virginians.**

At the state level, data on health coverage highlights the need for full funding of Medicaid, a program which provides coverage to nearly one in five West Virginians. The Medicaid program is facing a shortfall of approximately \$30 million state funding. If restored, this could draw down \$90 million in federal funding. **Given the high stakes for the most vulnerable families, the state should also move slowly and cautiously with plans to overhaul the Medicaid system.**

Upcoming Conferences of Interest

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★ **Child Care Check List** ★

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Things to look for when choosing a Child Care Provider or Day Care Center

CAREGIVERS/TEACHERS

- Do the caregivers/teachers seem to really like children?
- Are children greeted when they arrive?
- Are children's needs quickly met even when things get busy?
- Are the caregivers/teachers trained in CPR, first aid, and early childhood education?
- Will the caregivers/teachers always be ready to answer your questions?
- Will the caregivers/teachers tell you what your child is doing every day?
- Is there enough staff to serve the children?
- Are caregivers/teachers trained and experienced?
- Have they participated in early childhood development classes?

SETTING

- Is the atmosphere bright, clean, and pleasant?
- Is there a fenced-in outdoor play area with a variety of safe equipment?
- Can the caregivers/teachers see the entire playground at all times?
- Are there different areas for resting, quiet play and active play?
- Is there enough space for the children in all of these areas?

ACTIVITIES

- Is there a daily balance of play time, story time, activity time and nap time?
- Are the activities right for each age group?
- Are there enough toys and learning materials for the number of children?
- Are toys clean, safe and within reach of the children?

IN GENERAL

- Do you agree with the discipline practices?
- Do you hear the sounds of happy children?
- Are children comforted when needed?
- Is the program licensed or regulated?
- Are surprise visits by parents encouraged?
- Will your child be happy there?

For a complete list and to be updated join our email list by sending an email to

theDAWG-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Many conferences are either free or offer scholarships to families who want to go.

Early Childhood Education and Economic Development Policy Forum

October 9-10 at the Clay Center in Charleston

This forum, sponsored by West Virginia Vision Shared, will examine the contribution of early childhood education to the economic future of our state, featuring national and state leaders in business, education and government. For program and registration information, contact conference@mountainsidemedia.com, 523-6162.

Share the Vision Annual Prevention Conference

November 2-3 at the Charleston Civic Center
Conference website: <http://www.prevnet.org/STV/general.asp>

This annual conference sponsored by the WV Prevention Resource Center promotes the importance of a community-based approach to a continuum of care for children and families in West Virginia. For more information, visit the web site or contact Kathy Paxton at paxton@marshall.edu, 746-2077, ext. 16.

Growing Healthy Children: WV Children's Health Conference

November 10-12 at the Embassy Suites in Charleston
www.wvhealthykids.org/WV_Childrens_HCC2.htm

For more information, visit the website or contact Julie Greathouse at jdg_outreach@hotmail.com, 532- 6883.



Special thanks to Julie Pratt of Prevent Child Abuse WV for sharing this information.

Help Katrina Survivors



As you know, New Orleans has been devastated by Hurricane Katrina. As we listen to the news reports we wonder what we can do to help.

DAWG is helping by raising money to help the

Louisiana Welfare Rights Organization (WRO) help low-income families in New Orleans recover from Katrina. WRO is located in New Orleans, Louisiana and is one of the oldest still operating welfare rights/advocacy organizations. Among the services provided by WRO are job training and low income housing apartments that are both located in New Orleans. WRO has been a friend of DAWG and now it is time for DAWG to be a friend to WRO.

How the money will be used

The money will be used to help with the immediate needs of low-income people such as providing a means for them to evacuate the area and reach family or friends.

The money is also going to be used to help rebuild the WRO organization and to help low income families return to New Orleans and rebuild their lives. Right now there is a huge out pouring of support from groups such as Red Cross to help with the immediate needs but months from now when the people of New Orleans decide to return and rebuild their lives they will also need money.

Please help us help low-income families in New Orleans by sending a contribution to DAWG's WRO Fund. Donations are tax deductible.

**Send your donation
WRO Fund
c/o DAWG
PO Box 20079
Charleston, WV 25362**

Please make check payable to DAWG

100% of the money we raise will go directly to support low income families in New Orleans.

DID YOU KNOW?

DID YOU KNOW...

Even if you have used your lifetime 60 month/ 5 year limit on welfare you may still be able to get foodstamps, Medicaid, and other services.

DID YOU KNOW.....

You could receive **financial aid**—grants that you do *not* have to pay back—to go to college. Financial aid for college is not counted as income by DHHR.

To apply free online visit www.fafsa.ed.gov

If you are interested in going to college DAWG can help you through the process call us at (304) 347-9222

DID YOU KNOW....

That you can qualify to receive **free or reduced lunch** for you r children in school. For the 2005-2006 school year a family of four can make up to \$2,097 a month and qualify for free lunch or \$2,984 a month and qualify for reduced price lunch.

Contact your child's school for an application

Special thanks to our funders

- Public Welfare Foundation
- Appalachian Community Fund
- Commission on Religion in Appalachia
- The Schoenbaum Family Foundation
- The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation
- Individual Donors

DAWG does not receive state or federal funds or money from the United Way.



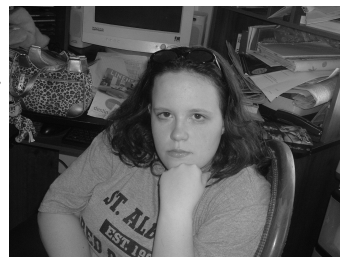
Thanks to a generous grant from **The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation**, we now have a new computer in the office for DAWG members and teen DAWG members to stop by and use.

What's Up Teen DAWG?

- We have a new website at <http://www.geocities.com/teendawgv/> go check it out and let me know what you would like to see on the website.
- Join our yahoo group email list now. You can join the email list by sending an email to teendawg-subscribe@yahoo.com Make sure you join our yahoo group so you can get updates and be informed of meetings and other stuff.
- We are going to be working with the Kanawha Family Resource Network to plan a community fair for teens. If you want to be involved let me know. (DarkAngelMoon@msn.com)

Join Teen DAWG and let your voice be heard. Show the adults we do care about our community and the future of the world. counts as community service

C-ya,
Beth



That Day *by Selena*

I found out everything that was true in my life was ultimately swept under the rug. Ever since I went to the health clinic, pissed in a plastic jar, and gave the contents to a young skinny almost perfect looking nurse.

The nurse proclaimed, "Congratulations, you're pregnant!" Why she even would congratulate a seventeen year old is beyond my knowledge. I picked up my school bag, which was filled with a load of homework, the nurses' expression had changed from joy to morose: "I wish you a good future."

I walked home that day wondering what this baby would look like, how it would act. Would it be like me, or like it's father. Of course he would have to deal with it. Well, I guess he's now dealing with it by avoiding me, getting stoned all the time, and even dating a girl I know. Yes, he's dealing with it. Because now it's not his problem anymore. It's mine.

I don't expect him to come around any time soon so it's just me doing it by myself. It's hard! This isn't the life I expected to live but it happens. I never thought it would happen to me but it did. I'm writing this article to give advice to teens who think they're pregnant and scared. I've been down that road already. Believe me it's not easy. Once you have your baby your whole life changes.

Hey teens!

This is your space in the newsletter. We need your stories, songs, poems, and art work to make this page really cool. This is your space to speak your mind. So if you have something you want in the newsletter, send it email itsdadawg@hotmail.com with *teen* page in the subject line or mail it to



DAWG/TeenDAWG
PO Box 20079
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Use Your Voice!

FOOD TAX AND FAMILIES

Recently in our state the food tax has been a big issue. Whether we should eliminate it all together? Or should we reduce it a little at a time? Maybe we should not cut it at all? I don't know which answer is right but I do know that anytime cuts are mentioned it is always the poorest who suffer. Cutting the food tax may help some families who don't get food stamps. (You don't pay tax on foodstamps) But if we cut the food tax then that means the state will have less money coming in. This year we have a surplus so the cuts sound good. But what about next year when we don't have a surplus or the year after? What happens when we have to make sure the state budget is balanced and there is no surplus and no income from the food tax? Something will have to be cut. That is what will happen. The state will make cuts and poor families and children will be hurting once again. Maybe we all need to know a little more about what will happen if the food tax is cut or eliminated before we decide to support it.

What do YOU have to say?
Send it in for the next newsletter and let us know.

BLAME GAME

It has already begun. The blame game. Blaming the poor for what has happened to them. As soon as the coverage started on the Hurricane and the survivors. The labeling and blaming began.

Here are a few examples:

- The poor people of color in New Orleans were labeled **refugees** not survivors or victims.
- There was a great deal of coverage on the squalor and filth in the superdome as if it was the fault of the survivors and not of the breakdown of government services.
- People were labeled **looters** for trying to find food for their children. We all know if our child was hungry and we were in that situation we would have done the same thing.

It is time for us to recognize the Blame Game for what it is. It is the same thing that was done to welfare and is being done to Medicaid. Using language to manipulate the way the average person views an issue. They use the blame game to throw the light off the true issues at hand. Remember don't always believe what you hear. Know **all** the facts and then make up your own mind.

In July, DAWG traveled to Wheeling to host a Making Connections training at the Ohio County Library. It was our first trip to the Wheeling area.



DAWG hosted a Making Connections training at Baptist Temple in Charleston. It was one of our largest trainings yet.



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501 Elizabeth Street Room # 7**

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For the latest information on trainings and meetings as well as other pertinent information join our email list at theDAWG-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

D.A.W.G. is a grassroots group comprised of current and former TANF recipients and concerned individuals who come together to share information and ideas and to advocate for each other, their neighbors, and themselves. Through a unified voice people living in poverty will be heard. Our purpose is to promote social justice and to empower former and current public assistance recipients and persons living in poverty by providing them with the knowledge, and the tools to change their lives.

*In a country well governed, poverty is something to be ashamed of.
In a country badly governed ,wealth is something to be ashamed of.*

~Confucius

