

# THE RISE OF POVERTY AND OPPORTUNITY

## *CLASP UPDATE*

*July 2007*

**Continuing the trend of greater political attention to poverty and opportunity, the following identifies some developments in just the last few months...**

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### STATE AND LOCAL POVERTY ACTIONS

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**WISCONSIN COALITION SEEKS END OF CHILD POVERTY** by 2020. Vision 2020, a campaign developed by the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families, the Wisconsin Head Start Association and the Wisconsin Community Action Program Association, is underway with one common mission and one shared hope: the end of child poverty by 2020. The campaign plans to increase awareness of child poverty and its impacts, discuss practical solutions that address the causes of child poverty in Wisconsin, encourage others to take action and convince state policy-makers that eliminating child poverty should be their top priority. <http://www.2020wi.org>.

**NEW YORK COALITION SEEKS COMMISSION TO ADDRESS POVERTY.** The New York State Community Action Association along with a growing list of organizations that now number 200, are calling on New York State to form a 2007 Statewide Commission on Poverty and Economic Security to examine the impact poverty in New York State and to develop a plan to address it. Organizers anticipate "The outcome of the Statewide Commission would be a strategic roadmap for future investment, intervention, and evaluation and make New York State the leading model for addressing poverty in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century."

<http://www.nyscaaonline.org/FirstPageNewsArticles/StateWidePovAndEcoSec.aspx>

**THE NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES** hosted an audio conference "Economic Opportunity for All: City Roles in Building Stronger Families and More Inclusive Communities," on June 21, 2007 to focus on strategies that municipal leaders have used to confront poverty and promote more equitable communities. The speakers were:

- Mayor Bob Kiss, City of Burlington, Vt.;
- Kathy Emery, Community Affairs Manager, City of Dayton, Ohio; and
- Lynn Knox, Economic Opportunity Program Manager, City of Portland, Ore.

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## POLLS AND POVERTY

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**MASON DIXON POLL ON CHILD POVERTY for Every Child Matters finds voters more likely** to vote for a presidential candidate whose agenda on children includes providing greater economic opportunities and resources to help lift the nearly 13 million American children living in poverty. The poll, conducted in 4 states found voters were *more likely* to vote for such a candidate by the margins listed below:

	Democrats	Republicans
Nevada:	86	43
South Carolina	84	68
Iowa	83	51
New Hampshire	87	65

[http://www.democracyinaction.org/dia/organizationsORG/ECM/www/site/PageServer.pagename.ecm\\_pollsreports.html](http://www.democracyinaction.org/dia/organizationsORG/ECM/www/site/PageServer.pagename.ecm_pollsreports.html)

**SURVEY ON GLOBALIZATION FINDS CHILD POVERTY WORRY.** A recent survey by Penn/Freedman found that “globalization is not feared in and of itself – but there are rising concerns related to a more global world: child poverty, outsourcing, higher energy prices etc. Topping the list as the greatest concern was ‘child poverty’ at 71 percent (companies moving overseas and gas prices at 70 percent; terrorism was 65 percent).

[http://www.dlc.org/ndol\\_ci.cfm?contentid=254153&kaid=108&subid=206](http://www.dlc.org/ndol_ci.cfm?contentid=254153&kaid=108&subid=206)

**POVERTY AND HUNGER SURVEY FINDS VOTERS PROBLEMS SURMOUNTABLE.** Seventy (69.1) percent of likely voters polled in a McLaughlin survey agree with the statement “We can end hunger in our time. Everyone, including our government must do their part. With the stroke of a pen, policies are made that redirect millions of dollars and affect millions of lives. By making our voices heard – writing a thoughtful letter, placing an urgent call, sending a personalized e-mail and motivating others to act together, we can help end the devastating cycle of hunger and poverty.”

<http://www.alliancetoendhunger.org/>

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## ON THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN TRAIL

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**ONE ECONOMY’s “247townhall”** is a month-long campaign seeking ideas and solutions to poverty in America. On June 22nd, 247townhall visited New Orleans where Presidential candidate Mitt Romney, John Edwards, and Barack Obama addressed the issue.

Romney spoke of four key components needed to end the cycle of poverty. First, he said every American needs a strong family. From the beginning of life, he said, kids need role models, ideally a two-parent model, to convey the value of education and marriage before having children. Second, Romney called for strengthening inner-city schools, referring to educational inequality as the greatest civil rights issue of our generation. He called for better teacher salaries and more school choice, especially for charter schools. Third, he advocated job training programs and childcare so as to allow more Americans to acquire better jobs to build a robust economy. Finally, Romney insisted on better health care for all Americans, citing the Massachusetts initiative as an example.

Edwards presented poverty as the key moral issue in America today and an important component of our image abroad: “For America to be what we’re capable of being at home and abroad, we have to be the example of what’s possible...Otherwise, we don’t have the moral authority to lead.” He described the 37 million people in poverty in America as “saying something about our character.” Although he did not lay out any specific proposals for ending poverty in his statement, he referenced the comprehensive agenda laid out in his new book. He closed by saying, “when I’m President of the United States, poverty will be back on the national agenda.”

Obama, in a written statement asserted, “These experiences taught me firsthand that poverty affects not only the 37 million Americans who live it, but also anyone invested in the purpose and meaning of our society. I believe that we have a collective duty to recommit ourselves to the American Dream; to strengthen that safety net, put the rungs back on that ladder to the middle-class, and give every family the chance that so many of our parents and grandparents had. This responsibility is one that has been neglected in Washington for far too long – a responsibility I intend to take very seriously as President.

Knowing that we all have an obligation to alleviate poverty, the next question is: How do we do it? We know what we need to do to help every family compete and prosper in a globalized world – we need to make fundamental investments in education, health care, affordable housing, science and technology, and job training, as well as helping parents support their children both financially and emotionally. “

*Romney Video:* <http://www.247townhall.org/node/315>

*Edwards Video:* <http://www.247townhall.org/node/318>

**ACORN Presidential Candidate Forum in Philadelphia.** The July 2 ACORN forum featured comments from three Democratic Presidential candidates, Hillary Clinton, John Edwards, and Dennis Kucinich.

Senator Clinton began by applauding ACORN for its fight to raise the minimum wage, as she reaffirmed her commitment to raising the minimum wage again. She also stated her commitment to improving several programs dedicated to helping lift individuals out of poverty including: affordable housing, programs to target predatory lenders, the EITC and universal health care. Clinton said that we need to do more than pass laws, however. We need to educate Americans on these programs and ensure that everyone who is eligible has access. In response to several questions raised by ACORN members, Senator Clinton spoke of her 10-point plan to rebuild New Orleans, her support for face-to-face counseling on home ownership to combat predatory mortgage companies, her support for working families including the Healthy Families Act and raising the EITC and her commitment to working with organizations like ACORN to ensure that these federally-funded programs reach eligible Americans.

Senator Edwards began by stating that ending poverty in America is central to his campaign for President and to his life. He announced his plan to raise the minimum wage to \$9.50/hour as President, and to index the minimum wage so that it continues to increase as wages do without having to go back to Congress. Edwards said, "Anybody working full-time in America should not live in poverty." In addition to raising the minimum wage, Edwards pledged to end poverty in 30 years by expanding the EITC, strengthening and reforming laws to allow workers to unionize in the workplace, helping low-income families be able to save by teaching financial literacy and matching personal savings, creating a national predatory lending law, establishing universal health care, improving access to affordable housing and paying for college tuition for young people who work. Edwards closed by saying that we need a President of the United States who wakes up every morning and feels in their gut that ending poverty is an important issue.

Video: <http://www.acorn.org/index.php?id=11875>