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Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law

## **New Data Finds 36.5 Million Americans in Poverty Shriver Center Calls on Federal Government to Take Action**

Today the Census Bureau released its figures on American poverty, and they reveal essentially no change. Poverty lingers at 12.3%, and child poverty at 17.4%. The income gap remains wide, with the top rungs of the economic ladder gaining income and everyone else languishing. And there are still 47 million Americans without health insurance.

"This is deeply disappointing, but not at all surprising," said John Bouman, president of the Sargent Shriver National Center On Poverty Law. "The Administration's posture of neglect, trickle-down tax policy, and retreat from a positive government role is predictably accomplishing nothing to reduce poverty and inequality."

This month we commemorate the Gulf hurricanes of two years ago. It is clear that success in taking on a big job like disaster relief and recovery requires more than individual initiative, private enterprise and active local government. Such an undertaking also calls for federal leadership, resources and competence. The federal government must commit to getting the job done and solicit American support. It must back leadership with strategic resources adequate to the task. And it must perform its own roles with competence and due speed. Lack of effective government is on display this month, as cameras return to New Orleans and find that so little has changed.

And today's Census Bureau numbers reveal a similar story with the fight against poverty. The administration has not attempted to rally the public to that task, not even rhetorically. Far from dedicating adequate resources, it continues to give threats and ultimatums against poor and middle class working families. Indeed, the President is poised to veto State Children's Health Insurance Program reauthorization bills passed by both houses of Congress that would dedicate funding towards millions more uninsured children.

"There is no better or easier way to make a significant gain against poverty and inequality than to guarantee that children receive preventive and early health care in order to maximize their life chances," said Bouman. "Both parties in Congress should push the investment in America's children past any presidential veto this fall."

As the presidential campaign season intensifies, the candidates' positions on the federal role in the fight against poverty should be measured carefully. We know it will take leadership, resources, and competence to make future Census Bureau reports show real progress in reducing poverty and improving equality and opportunity.

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The Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law, a national resource, champions law and policy promoting equal opportunity and support for low-income individuals, families, and communities so that they can escape poverty permanently.