



COALITION ON HUMAN NEEDS

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CONTACT: Deborah Weinstein
202-223-2532, ext. 31

Amy Saltzman
301-656-0348

Statement of Deborah Weinstein, executive director of the Coalition on Human Needs, on new Census Bureau Data on Poverty

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- The new poverty data released today by the Census Bureau show that six years of economic growth did not lead to better times for the nation's poor. In 2007, 12.5 percent of Americans were poor, up from 11.7 percent in the recession year of 2001.

Even more troubling, the Census Bureau data, which were collected in 2007, do not reflect the current economic downturn. Millions more people today are out of work or facing shrinking earnings. Paying for necessities such as food, heat, gas and health care is even tougher today than it was a year ago. If the poor saw no benefit over the course of the most recent recovery, their situation is clearly worse today.

Children have paid the heaviest price. Eighteen percent were poor in 2007, a dramatic increase from 2001 when 16.3 percent of children were in poverty. Between 2006 and 2007 alone, the number of children in poverty grew by nearly half a million. The middle class also suffered, with median incomes shrinking slightly from \$50,588 in 1999-2000 to \$49,901 in 2006-2007, according to the Current Population Survey.

Helping the poor and near poor through the new economic downturn is essential to rebuilding our economy. Congress should immediately enact an economic recovery package that includes food and heating aid. Tax legislation should include an expansion of the Child Tax Credit so that it is available to more poor families. These actions should be the first steps toward a national goal to cut poverty in half in the next ten years.

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The Coalition on Human Needs (CHN) is an alliance of national organizations working together to promote public policies which address the needs of low-income and other vulnerable populations. The Coalition's members include civil rights, religious, labor and professional organizations and those concerned with the well being of children, women, the elderly and people with disabilities. CHN is located at 1120 Connecticut Ave. NW Suite 910, Washington, D.C. 20036. For more information please visit www.chn.org