



Leadership Conference  
on Civil Rights



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## Senator John Edwards and Major Organizations Announce Multi-Year Campaign to Cut Poverty in Half

Philadelphia - May 13, 2008 – Former Presidential candidate Senator John Edwards announced today that he will serve as National Chair of [Half in Ten: From Poverty to Prosperity](#), a new campaign to cut poverty by 50% over the next ten years. This campaign brings together four organizations with the experience, knowledge, and resources to make this goal a reality: ACORN, the Center for American Progress Action Fund (CAPAF), the Coalition on Human Needs (CHN), and the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights (LCCR).

Speaking before a crowd of activists at North Philadelphia's Thankful Baptist Church, Edwards called on Congress, the Presidential candidates, and all Americans to make the fight against poverty a priority. "The challenge before us is to make it so that hard work is enough to get ahead again. That is not just a question of helping our brothers and sisters who are living in poverty – it is a question of restoring the fundamental fairness that this country was founded upon," said Senator Edwards.

"The city of Philadelphia is proud to host the launch of this important campaign. I am committed to ensuring economic opportunity for all residents of my city," said Mayor Michael Nutter.

The multi-year campaign will elevate focus on the issues facing the poor and middle class in America, building an effective constituency to advocate for specific policy changes. "Poverty sounds big and complex, yet by making some simple legislative changes, we can immediately lift thousands of people out of poverty. But we know to be successful this can't just be an inside the Beltway, pointy-headed intellectual conversation. That's why we're here in Philadelphia embarking on a national campaign, a campaign that will show results at the policy and grassroots level." said Wade Henderson, President of LCCR.

"The campaign has picked a set of policy solutions that are targeted, achievable, and effective. Working with advocates across the country, we will cut poverty in half," said Deborah Weinstein, Executive Director of CHN. Working from the recommendations of the Center for American Progress's 2007 [Poverty Task Force report](#), the first years of the campaign will focus on:

- Expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit;
- Raising both state and federal minimum wages;
- Increasing the number of low-income families receiving child care assistance;
- Increasing eligibility for unemployment insurance

According to modeling by the Urban Institute, the expanded tax credits, minimum wage increases, and child care assistance alone would cut poverty by a full 26%.

"In Pennsylvania, we are confident that we can raise the minimum wage to \$9.35 by 2010 and create a state Earned Income Tax Credit at 30% of the federal credit," said Maude Hurd, National President of ACORN. After the launch of the campaign, Senator Edwards met with community leaders and state and local elected officials in order to build support for these specific goals.

"Hurricane Katrina, the housing crisis and low-paying jobs without benefits prove that the status quo is no longer tolerable," said John D. Podesta, President and CEO of CAPAF. "At this critical moment, our four organizations are joining with others to build a movement for needed and achievable change."

Closing the event, Senator Edwards promised, "As part of this campaign, I will be taking a tour over the summer to visit some of the places where Americans are struggling, to highlight the need for national action. But this is not just about highlighting the problem. It is also about highlighting the solutions – because this is a problem we can solve."

"We've made great strides before. In the past, when we have chosen to take up the cause of our brothers and sisters who are struggling to get by, we have helped millions of Americans to lift themselves out of poverty. Today, if we get behind the practical, work-based solutions this campaign has proposed, we can do it again."

[The Center for American Progress Action Fund](#) transforms progressive ideas into policy through rapid response communications, legislative action, grassroots organizing and advocacy, and partnerships with other progressive leaders throughout the country and the world. The Action Fund is also the home of the Progress Report and ThinkProgress.

[The Leadership Conference on Civil Rights](#) consists of almost 200 national organizations, representing persons of color, women, children, labor unions, individuals with disabilities, older Americans, major religious groups, gays and lesbians and civil liberties and human rights groups. Its mission: to promote the enactment and enforcement of effective civil rights legislation and policy.

[ACORN](#) (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now) is the nation's largest community organization of low- and moderate-income families, with over 350,000 member families organized into 800 neighborhood chapters in 103 cities across the country. Since 1970 ACORN has taken action and won victories on issues of concern to our members, including better housing for first time homebuyers and tenants, living wages for low-wage workers, more investment in our communities from banks and governments, and better public schools.

[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.