

Deliver **YOUR** Message About Poverty After the Census Data is Released on August 26:

Sample Letters to the Editor

Here are several alternate samples of letters that we hope you'll find helpful to draw upon in responding to coverage about the release of the Census Bureau's poverty, income, and health insurance data in newspapers in your area. We encourage you **not** to take these letters as is, but to personalize them. You don't even have to look up your paper's address; simply visit http://salsa.democracynaction.org/o/125/letter/?letter_KEY=1026. Here you can type or paste your letter text into a box provided and choose the newspaper to which you'd like to send your letter.

Of course these are written without knowing what the data will show on Tuesday, August 26. You'll need to wait to get confirmation of what really happened in 2007 in your state and the nation. We will provide that update as soon as we can on Tuesday. For instructions on how to find and use the right Census tables, see **Useful Tools**, here: <http://www.chn.org/issues/statistics/povertyday2008.html>

Points we hope your letter will make:

- ✓ Poverty is too high – even if it declined slightly in 2007, in most states it will be higher than it was when we were in the last recession (2001), even though we've been through years of economic growth.
- ✓ Now, things are worse than they were in 2007 – rising joblessness, rising cost of necessities – making it highly likely that poverty is worse now.
- ✓ It's time for a national commitment to reduce poverty (or, to cut poverty in half in ten years or similar goal your group favors).
- ✓ This is attainable – and important first steps Congress should take in September include allowing more poor children to benefit from the Child Tax Credit and enacting an economic recovery package that helps families afford food, home energy, and other necessities. [You may wish to emphasize other immediate state or federal actions.]

MORAL VOICE/COMMITMENT TO CUT POVERTY IN HALF

To the Editor:

On Tuesday, we learned that poverty remains stuck at unconscionably high levels even after years of economic growth. (*Cite article name and date.*) And those were the "good times." The Census Bureau reported on findings from 2007, just before the recession kicked in. Now rising joblessness and the skyrocketing cost of necessities like food and fuel must mean that poverty and hardship are rising again.

In the most prosperous nation in the world, it is intolerable to stand by while millions of families struggle just to make ends meet. It's time to make a national commitment to do something about it. Cutting poverty in half in ten years is an attainable goal.

For example, just four straightforward steps - modestly increasing the Earned Income Tax Credit, making the child tax credit available to ALL families with children, raising the minimum wage, and helping low and moderate income families pay for child care - would reduce poverty in the US by more than 25%.

The problem is too important for us to continue to ignore.

UNSHARED PROSPERITY 1

To the Editor:

On Tuesday, the US Census Bureau released troubling data showing how stubbornly persistent poverty is. *(Cite article name and date.)* While *[state name]* showed slight improvement last year, our state has more poor people/a higher proportion of poor people now than in 2000, the year before the last downturn. We've gone through a full economic cycle with higher poverty and with middle-income workers losing ground. There was economic growth up through 2007, but most of us did not share in it. And now of course it's much worse, with more out of work or squeezed by the high cost of food and fuel.

Our agency/our community sees/has *[people who cannot afford food; people who have lost their jobs...]* every day. Helping them will make the economy grow for all of us, as more are able to buy what they need. Congress should act quickly in September to reduce poverty and boost the economy by allowing more poor families to get the Child Tax Credit, and by increasing aid for food, home heating, unemployment, and state Medicaid programs. Basic steps like these should form the beginning of a national commitment to cut poverty in half in ten years. Our high poverty rates show how badly such a commitment is needed.

UNSHARED PROSPERITY 2

To the Editor:

On August 27, the *[paper name]* reported only a fraction of the story about persistently high poverty in *[state]* and the U.S. *[cite article name.]* The fact is, years of economic growth did not reduce the number/proportion of poor people in *[state]*; their numbers grew from *[x percent]* in 2001 to *[y percent]* in 2007. *[Or, years of economic growth only slightly reduced the number/proportion of poor people in [state].]* Nor was growth shared by middle-income workers, who lost ground. During this same period, corporate profits grew by about 10 percent. Most people did not share in those gains.

We've got to do better. Our agency/community/congregation/state sees growing numbers of *[people in need]* now that the economy is in trouble. To turn things around, we need shared prosperity. We need a national commitment to cut poverty in half in ten years, a goal now espoused by many groups and close to 20 cities or states. As a first step, Congress should enact an economic recovery package with help for the unemployed as well as food, energy, and Medicaid assistance so people can buy what they urgently need. It should also help more poor children through the Child Tax Credit.

EMPHASIS ON CHILDREN

To the Editor:

Children are more likely to be poor than any other age group, according to a new report from the Census Bureau *[article name and date]*. In *[state]*, *x percent* of children were poor in 2007, while total poverty was *y percent*. *[if so]* Child poverty is worse in our state than the national average for children, which, at *z percent*, is bad enough. Setting a national goal to reduce poverty is long overdue. The need is especially urgent now, because the Census Bureau is reporting on findings that precede the economic downturn we're now in. As bad as the 2007 statistics are, it is certain that more children are poor today, with their parents struggling to afford rising food and fuel prices with lower earnings.

Children's development is threatened when they do not get proper nutrition so there is no time to waste. When Congress returns in September, it should quickly enact an economic recovery package that includes short-term boosts in food stamps and other nutrition aid. It should also make sure that more poor families get the benefit of the Child Tax Credit. These are critically important first steps towards the attainable goal of cutting poverty in half.