

Economic Priorities for the New Administration and Congress - 2009

Women of Reform Judaism Executive Committee Statement

"If there is a needy person among you... do not harden your heart and shut your hand against your kin. Rather, you must open your hand and lend whatever is sufficient.."
(Deuteronomy 15:7-11)

As the expanding crisis looms over our economy, with home foreclosures and job loss causing increasing hunger and poverty, Women of Reform Judaism calls for a response to the urgent needs of impoverished Americans, while boosting the economy, a first priority for the new administration and the 111th Congress. The Coalition on Human Needs report, *Towards a Shared Recovery: Essential Steps to Reverse a Long and Deep Recession*, indicates that this should include expansion of nutrition and home energy assistance, child care and Head Start, and state-run health care programs, such as Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program. Creation of new jobs directed towards rebuilding and greening the infrastructure and helping families to stay in their homes should be an integral part of the emergency stimulus package. Because so many families are headed by women, pay equity is essential to insuring their financial stability.

Almost exponentially rising health care costs with over 45 million uninsured Americans is a major cause of home loss and poverty for the working poor. The inadequate health care access available to impoverished uninsured Americans often leads to otherwise preventable disease and death. Health care reform to cover all Americans is an urgent need, which we urge the 111th Congress and the new administration to begin addressing immediately.

The new administration and the 111th United States Congress have begun to address these priorities. The president has put forth his American Recovery and Reinvestment Plan, which seeks to create or save jobs through investments in health care, energy, and education, and Congress is working on economic recovery packages, which include many of the priorities listed above. The House of Representatives and Senate have voted to enable women who are paid less than men for essentially the same work to challenge their employers in court for sex discrimination. The House has also passed legislation to expand the Children's Health Insurance Program. Senate action is expected imminently.

Based on longstanding positions on economic justice, WRJ congratulates the president and Congress for their timely attention to important social and economic priorities and:

1. Calls on Congress and the new administration to rapidly deploy the urgently needed social and economic justice provisions described above and a new emergency stimulus package, and...
2. Urges U.S. sisterhoods and members to respond to alerts from WRJ, Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, and other like-minded organizations to call on Congress and the administration to enact and implement the social and economic measures and the emergency stimulus package.

For more information on WRJ and Social Justice, visit www.wrj.org/social-justice-home