



Voice of the Poor
March 2010 Newsletter

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State Legislature:

- HB 2161 (payday lending) was withdrawn from the House Banking and Insurance Agenda pending additional sponsors.
- SB 1070 (immigration – Pearce, et al) opposed by the AZ Catholic Conference and subject to an Action Alert by VOP passed the Senate (17 to 13) on a party line vote with the exception of Senator Carolyn Allen (Scottsdale) who voted “No”. The bill has been transmitted to the House. Basic provisions include creation of the category of felony trespass for unlawful presence and enforcement of federal immigration law by local authorities. The House companion bill, HB 2632 (also opposed by VOP), passed Military Affairs and Public Safety (5 to 2) on a party line vote (2/24/10).
- Budget bills including additional borrowing and approval to place a one-cent temporary (3 years) sales tax increase on the May 18 ballot were approved in the Sixth Special Session.* *Not approved* by both houses was HB 2250 proposing to reduce tax categories beginning in 2012 (individual and corporate income tax and a phase out of state property tax) at an estimated combined loss by the Joint Legislative Budget Committee of nearly \$1 billion over 10 years .

The temporary sales tax increase, supported by the SVdP Diocesan Board, will appear as Proposition 100 in the May Special Election. The legislature will meet during the first week in March to address the deficit of over \$2 billion for 2010 with provisions for further cuts if Proposition 100 does not pass on May 18. Health care cuts to AHCCCS and elimination of KidsCare proposed by Governor Brewer will be devastating to low income Arizonans, the health care industry and hospitals resulting in an estimated loss to AZ of \$2.7 billion in state and federal funding and 42,000 jobs. (AZ Republic, 2/25/10).

WHO are my legislators? Go to www.azleg.gov and click on “Find My Legislators” or call (602) 926-3559 (Senate) or (602) 926-4221 (House).

Rental/Utilities Relief – Two Programs Using Conference Referrals:

The **Family Assistance Ministry (FAM)** remains open and funded at Special Ministries. The program is based on **conference referrals** and a budget assessment used to determine a family's sustainability after **one time help** from FAM for rent and utilities. To refer a family to FAM and schedule an appointment, please call (602) 261-6856. (*Note: This number is for conference use ONLY and should not be given out!*)

HPRP (Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program) is a federal stimulus program administered by the City of Phoenix. SVdP is one of several non-profits referring potential clients living in Phoenix to HPRP caseworkers at Travis Williams Family Service Center. *Job loss must be linked to the economic downturn.* If there is an eviction notice, it should be FAXed to the HPRP office at Watkins with the program application (FAX line: 602- 850-6718) If you wish to receive updates on the program, please send your e-mail and conference name to HPRP@SVdP-Phx-AZ.org. Questions? Call the HPRP phone line at Watkins and leave a message: (602) 850-6706.

Free Tax Preparation:

VITA sites: Tax time is here! Low/moderate income families (up to \$50,000 annual income) are eligible for *free* tax preparation services including help with Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit at these sites. To locate sites near your conference, please go to <http://cir.org/seasonal-tax-vita.html> or call (602) 263-8856 or (800) 352-3792 for area codes 520 and 928.

Voice of the Poor meets monthly during the Arizona legislative session. The next scheduled meeting will be on Monday, March 15 at 3:30 p.m. at Vincentian Support Services, 420 W. Watkins Road, Phoenix. To place an item on the agenda or to be added to the VOP e-mail network, contact Lucy Howell at (602) 695-1604 or at Howishome@aol.com