



## What's Up in the Legislature

(January 23, 2009)

Things they are a-changing. Barack Hussein Obama is now President of the country. Janet Napolitano, Secretary of Homeland Security, resigned as Governor of Arizona on January 20, and Jan Brewer was officially sworn in as Governor on the 22nd.

### **Budget**

Things are picking up budget-wise as Arizona faces a \$1.6 billion deficit in the '09 budget with an estimated \$3 billion gap in 2010. The House and Senate Appropriations Chairs appear to have centered their hopes in balancing the budgets on massive cuts which have drawn opposition from just about everyone. In Thursday's House Appropriations Committee, Representative Krysten Sinema's (D-15) motion to remain open to ideas *other than just budget cuts* passed on a bipartisan vote of 7-4.

- Voice of the Poor representatives are meeting with local, state and federal elected representatives to tell the story of increasing need reported by our conferences. (February VOP Newsletter details Conference responses to a recent VOP survey).
- President Joe Riley will be sending a letter to members of the Legislature expressing concern about possible elimination of General Assistance (GA), the state fund used to assist disabled while they wait for approval for federal disability as well as possible elimination of KidsCare (healthcare coverage for 66,000 children whose family incomes are below 200% of the federal poverty level).
- The proposed elimination of KidsCare comes at a time when the U.S. House of Representatives has passed reauthorization of the 3:1 (federal to state dollars) program. The Senate is expected to act on S-CHIP this coming week.
- Remember to contact your legislators and ask them to work for alternatives to getting through the budget mess without eliminating programs that help those least able to help themselves.
- If you are not sure who your State legislators are (you have 3 – 2 Reps and 1 Sen.), go to [www.azleg.gov](http://www.azleg.gov) and click on "How to find My Legislators". A phone call to their offices means a lot!

- **As requested by the U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops, Catholic Charities and National Voice of the Poor, please call the local offices of Senators Kyl and McCain tomorrow and express support for the reauthorization of S-CHIP (State Children's Health Insurance Program) as the underlying funding for KidsCare in AZ. Tell the office your name and that you work with Arizona's poor as a member of SVdP.**

**Senator Jon Kyl (602) 840-1891**

**Senator John McCain (602) 952-2410**

**Bills:**

The House has introduced 425 bills and Senate 137. VOP is tracking the following:

SB 1108 (landlords; foreclosures; tenant notice)

HB 2269 ( similar to SB 1108 – both require notification of tenant when rental home goes into foreclosure)

SB 1013 (AHCCCS; ambulance services)

SB 1014 (AHCCCS; long-term care; eligibility)

HB 2091 (charitable organizations; solicitations; disclosures) An effort to simplify the charitable tax credit for organizations serving the working poor such as SVdP.

HB 2225 (regulations; payday loans) Establishes alternative to payday loans by establishing procedure for loans of up to \$3,000 by banks and credit unions.

HB 2237 (AHCCCS; verification of eligibility)