

# FIGHTING POVERTY

— *with faith* —

## Good Jobs, Green Jobs

As communities of faith, we are grounded in a shared tradition of justice and compassion, and we are called upon to hold ourselves and our communities accountable to the moral standard of this tradition. However, as we look across our country today, we see a nation where millions of people are lacking the basic necessities of life; we see growing numbers of jobless individuals, and even more persons who are working, but whose wages do not pay enough to put a family above the poverty line.

Our common scriptures present a vision of shared responsibility that endows the notion of “work” with an inherent dignity yet also commands that we care for the vulnerable among us. *Our common faith values call on us to respond by advocating public policies that promote decent work, enhance our social safety net, and ensure that our neighbors have the opportunity to access both.*

**One new approach that seeks to accomplish these objectives is “Green Pathways out of Poverty.”** As billions of stimulus dollars for job creation make their way through state legislatures, and as our federal government prepares to pass comprehensive climate legislation, the faith community is committed to advocating for policies that ensure that this economic recovery yields real poverty-reduction gains. We must retire the term “working poor” and create an economy in which anyone who works full-time has the means to sustain his/her family and in which those who cannot work can live with dignity.

While our nation’s transition to a new, energy efficient economy is already taking shape, **it is up to us to ensure that this transition will lead to meaningful poverty-reduction and that communities are not left out of the opportunities presented by the emerging, green sectors.** Therefore, the undersigned organizations call on our government and our communities to seize the opportunity presented by the transition to develop workforce policies that benefit all communities. These policy changes must:

- Target funds toward projects that help low-income families develop the necessary skills to compete in a new economy;
- Ensure green industries create “good jobs” with decent benefits, family-supporting wages and safe working conditions;
- Promote projects that improve the quality of life for low-income families by lowering energy costs and enhancing public health through safer housing.
- Create pipelines that enable low-income people to access jobs in green, traditional, and other newly emerging industries. This includes funding worker training targeted at disadvantaged communities and amending our social assistance policies to ensure that people transitioning from welfare to work have the opportunity to obtain jobs; and
- Ensure equity and transparency in the distribution of funding associated with creation of new workforce development, including green jobs. This includes allocating funds toward projects that include people of color, women, and other traditionally under-represented communities.

**To this end, the undersigned national faith-based organizations are committed to participating in an interfaith week of action, October 14<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup>, 2009 in order to urge our**

**elected officials to make poverty-reduction a key goal of the transition to a new green economy.**

During this week, we will be providing opportunities for our local congregations, student organizations, faith-based service-providers, and other affiliates to engage in interfaith volunteer projects, community relations building, public education, and advocacy on the issue of shared economic prosperity and workforce development that includes innovative, green pathways out of poverty. By coordinating our messaging, holding joint events, and promoting partnerships among our respective faith groups, we hope to enhance our work to build the political and public will to reduce poverty.

Every day faith organizations serve individuals in need within our communities. But our efforts to sustain our brothers and sisters living in poverty must be complemented with a serious plan of action from our political leaders to reduce the number of needy. By speaking out collectively during this week, we will build on our *Fighting Poverty with Faith* efforts of 2008. We hope this second annual week of action will expand the national conversation on the need to create green pathways out of poverty, and create a mandate for our political leadership to aggressively pursue an anti-poverty agenda.

1. Alliance to End Hunger
2. American Baptist Churches USA
3. Association of Jewish Family and Children's Agencies
4. BBYO, Inc.
5. Bread for the World
6. Catholic Charities USA
7. Center of Concern
8. The Episcopal Church
9. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
10. Evangelicals for Social Action
11. Hindu American Foundation
12. Hindu American Seva Charities
13. International Association of Jewish Vocational Services
14. Islamic Relief
15. Islamic Society of North America
16. Jewish Council for Public Affairs
17. Jewish Labor Committee
18. Jewish Reconstructionist Federation
19. Jewish Women International
20. Lutheran Services in America
21. MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
22. The National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
23. National Council of Churches USA
24. National Council of Jewish Women
25. NETWORK: A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
26. Progressive National Baptist Church
27. The Rabbinical Assembly
28. Society of St. Vincent DePaul
29. Sojourners
30. Union for Reform Judaism
31. United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
32. United Jewish Communities
33. The United Methodist Church – General Board of Church and Society
34. Women of Reform Judaism