

Missouri Association for Social Welfare 2008 Program Goals

PREAMBLE: In a time of economic growth, our state policymakers refused to provide health coverage to the hundreds of thousands of Missourians who lack coverage, refused to provide even a small supplement to seniors who receive only \$10 in monthly food stamps, refused to increase funding for the successful Housing Trust Fund that keeps families from losing their homes, but enacted tax breaks for the already well-off and pushed through a proposal that is distinctly unwelcoming to our newest immigrants.

In a period such as this, MASW's responsibilities are to a) continue research that calls public attention to changing social problems, b) monitor policy-making to insure that existing resources are not diverted away from human services in favor of more powerful interests, c) advocate for important initiatives in anticipation of better times and d) support federal initiatives that would increase federal resources for Missouri's low income people. In this light the following principles to evaluate legislation, budget and policy development in Missouri have been adopted by the Board of MASW:

- 1) Safeguard and defend services for the most vulnerable in our state,
- 2) Create a progressive system of taxation that will increase state revenues in an equitable manner,
- 3) Invest in prevention that can avert high intervention costs by helping people before they are in serious – and more expensive – difficulties,
- 4) Invest in people, families, and communities in ways that build capacity, and
- 5) Support equal rights for all people in Missouri.

POLICY PRIORITIES

Help More Missourians Become and Stay Healthy through universal access to affordable, quality healthcare, including mental health services, for all people in Missouri, starting with restoration of coverage to those who lost coverage due to changes in eligibility in 2005, and through increasing state support for nutrition assistance to those in need.

Help More Missourians Keep Their Homes by increasing funding for the Missouri Housing Trust Fund, increasing protection and assistance for borrowers through legislation to ban predatory lending practices, and increasing opportunities for people to earn their way out of poverty.

Help More Missourians Reach Their Full Potential by supporting legislation that extends a helping hand to those who are too often made to feel unwelcome – those subjected to racial discrimination, those re-entering society from the corrections system, and those who were born in other nations – and by supporting legislation that protects them from exploitation and injustice.

TASK FORCE GOALS

MASW is unique in that, as an umbrella organization, we can draw attention to the nexus of issues and how public policy regarding one issue will affect many other issues. As our efforts in 2008 focus on the policy priorities set out above, our Task Forces will support these over-arching goals by working on issue-specific goals.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS TASK FORCE

The Affordable Housing and Homelessness Task Force is committed to increasing the supply of affordable, accessible housing, and reducing the numbers of homeless people in Missouri through the prioritization of rental, utility, and affordable housing assistance into the areas of greatest need.

Goals for 2008

1. Actively support legislative increases for the Missouri Housing Trust Fund;
2. Work toward affirmatively furthering fair housing and the elimination of housing discrimination in Missouri;
3. Preserve, Protect, and Upgrade Low-Income Housing Stock by
 - a. Supporting efforts toward an Energy Affordability Plan;
 - b. Increasing Universal Design; and
 - c. Opposing indiscriminant use of Eminent Domain
4. Support the establishment of a Department of Housing in Missouri to insure all housing funds and programs in Missouri are located in one state agency; and
5. Support the establishment of a National Housing Trust Fund.

ASSET DEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE

- 1) Monitor legislation pertaining to tax credit changes that could impact the Family Development Account (FDA) Tax Credits legislation; and, if changes are proposed, organize advocacy efforts that make it easier for community organizations to participate in the FDA tax credit program without eliminating individual savings accounts for low-income Missourians as an allowable activity under the legislation.
- 2) Educate legislators and the public about the impact and importance of asset development programs in Missouri. This goal will include holding an asset development advocacy day at the Capitol and organizing a state-wide effort to implement the national Buy ME (Buy Microenterprise) campaign that seeks to promote consumers to buy locally and support the microenterprises in their communities.
- 3) Position the Asset Development Task Force to serve as a central clearinghouse of Missouri asset development information including a calendar of relevant events, funding opportunities, best practices, potential collaborations, practitioner directory, and impact and outcomes data.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE TASK FORCE

- Advocate for parole policies that acknowledge prisoners' progress and allow more opportunities for parole of prisoners, including those with long-term sentences.
- Urge all involved in the Missouri re-entry process to provide positive assistance (health-care, help with obtaining ID's, family assistance, classes, mentoring, treatment and expungement of records) and to diminish obstacles (fees, housing and food stamp restrictions) for offenders returning to society

- Critique the effectiveness and cost of prison medical services and advocate for positive change.
- Work in conjunction with the MASW hunger task force for the passage of a bill that would allow Missouri to opt out of the lifetime ban on ex-drug offenders from receiving food stamps.

ECONOMIC JUSTICE TASK FORCE

Purpose: To increase the equality of economic opportunity, and to decrease the growing wealth and income gaps in our society.

2007-08 Goals

- 1) Work actively in the legislative process to promote income and tax equity, and to increase the state's fiscal capacity to provide for the common good.
- 2) Support progressive legislation on economic justice issues (tax justice, predatory lending, subprime mortgage problems, utility rates) and work with each MASW Chapter to hold at least one forum on one of these topics.
- 3) Explore opportunities to promote utility conservation incentives, such as a lower rate for the minimum essential service and higher rates for higher usage.
- 4) Contact civic organizations in chapter areas about presentations on tax justice.

HEALTH ACCESS TASK FORCE (Includes Mental Health)

The Missouri Association for Social Welfare Health Access Project supports the Institute of Medicine's principles for health care reform, but expands these to include oral health and mental health care. These principles are: Health care coverage should be universal, continuous, affordable to individuals and families, affordable and sustainable to society, and should enhance health and well-being by promoting access to high-quality care that is effective, efficient, safe, timely, patient-centered and equitable.

To achieve this, our goals for 2008 are:

- 1) Support legislation that increases the number of people in Missouri who have access to health care and moves us closer to universal coverage;
- 2) Increase funding for mental health services to expand coverage of persons in need and increase reimbursement rates for providers;
- 3) Maintain a consistent public dialogue about health care delivery system problems and affordable, equitable solutions utilizing media, meetings, forums, surveys, reports, conferences, collaborations, and partnerships;
- 4) Fully participate with local, state and national partners, including mental health advocates and organizations, in the opportunities to expand coverage at the state and national levels.

HUMAN RIGHTS TASK FORCE

The Human Rights Task Force will work in close cooperation with our partners, especially Missouri Immigrants and Refugees Advocates (MIRA), to make our state a place that welcomes newcomers and extends justice to all people in our state.

- Advocate for comprehensive immigration legislation at the federal level, where this issue should be addressed and resolved.
- Work with coalition partners to defeat the proposed “English-only” amendment that will be on the statewide ballot in 2008.

HUNGER TASK FORCE

- Work in conjunction with the MASW Criminal Justice task force for the passage of a bill that would allow Missouri to opt out of the lifetime ban on ex- drug offenders from receiving food stamps.
- Work in conjunction with Legal Services of Eastern Missouri to educate area community members on the Food Stamps program and ways to improve the program, and work with them and the Missouri Budget Project to create the 2007 Missouri Food Stamps program report.
- Work in conjunction with other Missouri anti-hunger organizations to inquire into why Missouri does not have the Seniors Farmers Market program and to work to get the State to take advantage of the program in 2008, and to re-file and work for the passage of a Supplemental Food Stamps for Seniors bill.
- Work in conjunction with the Missouri Food Bank Association to educate legislators on Hunger in Missouri by organizing a Hunger Advocacy Day and by providing them with information regarding hunger in Missouri.

NOTICE TO MASW MEMBERS

MASW Members will vote on these proposed 2008 Program Goals at the Membership Meeting that will be held on Thursday, October 25, 2007, as part of our 107th Annual Conference at the Holiday Inn Executive Center in Columbia. The meeting will start at 8:00 a.m. and includes breakfast.