



**SHRIVER
CENTER**

Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law

To our potential new leaders:

Two years ago, Hurricane Katrina shattered the belief that poverty doesn't exist in America. Our country began to pay serious attention to the role federal government plays in taking action to end deep, persistent poverty. The disaster in New Orleans reminded us all that there is a Lower Ninth Ward in every community across the country.

As we commemorate the second anniversary of this monumental tragedy, we must move towards creating new paths to opportunity—not only where the levees broke, but where we as a society have failed to support generations of working families.

And those families number in the millions. The most recent census tells us that despite six years of economic growth, poverty stagnates at a level higher than it was in 2001. With 36 million Americans still struggling to escape official poverty, and tens of millions more unable to pay subsistence expenses with their earnings, America must take action.

We ask you to make ending poverty one of your national priorities. As you determine the goals for your presidential term, consider a vision of a better America that brings greater opportunity to our nation's poor while protecting and strengthening our middle class.

The following is a twelve-point plan to bring opportunity to all communities and families affected by poverty. The Sargent Shriver National Center On Poverty Law recommends the following measures:

Strengthen the Legal Foundation for Civil Rights and Racial Justice. *We need vigorous enforcement of public and private civil rights laws, particularly the right to vote and access to legal services*

Establish Affordable Quality Health Care for All. *Access to health care is essential to our nation's social and economic well-being.*

Guarantee Economic Safety for People with Employment Challenges. *With help, many of the chronically unemployed can participate in the national economy. Those who cannot must have a humane safety net.*

Invest in the Public Good Through Fair Budget and Tax Policies. *Ending poverty requires funding and fair fiscal policies in order to support legislative action.*

Expand Low-Income Housing in Economically Diverse Communities. *Affordable housing in communities of opportunity is key to upward economic mobility.*

Create Redemptive Opportunities for People with Criminal Records. *Success can be achieved through employment and removal of legal barriers.*

Increase Economic Mobility Through Lifelong Education. *From universal pre-school to adult learning, education fuels life changes and opportunity for success.*

Link Economic Development to Workforce Development Opportunities. *Economic development should produce career-type jobs with benefits, and training programs should open those jobs to current lower paid workers.*

Advance Low-Wage Workers by Making Work Pay. *Childcare, health care, sick leave, fair wages and tax credits make lower paying jobs more capable of supporting a family.*

Build and Protect Assets for Financial Stability and Growth. *Savings, investments, access to good credit, and consumer protection build the foundation for economic mobility.*

Protect Access to the American Dream for Immigrants and Refugees. *Noncitizens are more likely to live in poverty than citizens. Immigration reform is critical.*

Ensure Economic Opportunity and Safety for Women and Girls. *National policies must break the tie between gender and poverty.*

We believe that these policies are the components of a comprehensive antipoverty policy agenda.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Bouman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "J".

John Bouman
President
The Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
www.povertylaw.org