



SHRIVER CENTER

Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law

POVERTY ACTION REPORT

TAKING ACTION TO END POVERTY

DECEMBER 2007

Shriver Center Awards Dinner Honors Those “Who Care”

Thanks to numerous committed volunteers, generous sponsors, and longtime friends, the Shriver Center’s 2007 Awards Dinner, on November 29, raised well over \$350,000, reaching close to the year-end goal of \$400,000. Proceeds from the event—whose theme was “Who Cares?”—will support the Shriver Center’s mission to take action through policy development, communications, and diverse advocacy strategies to end poverty.



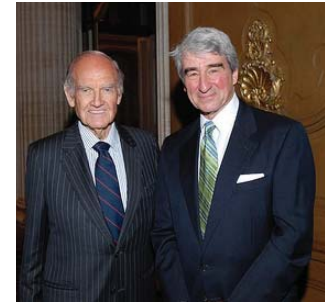
Shriver president John Bouman (far left) and former president Rita McLennon (far right) with Board Chair Sunny Fischer and dinner host Sam Waterston.

Every year since 2000 the Shriver Center has bestowed the Sargent Shriver Award for Equal Justice on individuals who go above and beyond in their commitment to social justice and economic equality. The Honorable George McGovern, who has worked for five decades to alleviate hunger, was this year’s honoree and keynote speaker. McGovern was the first director of Pres. John F. Kennedy’s Food for Peace program. In the U.S. Senate he led in bringing about such lifelines as the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), school lunch, and food stamps. In 2001 the United Nations World Food Program appointed him as its first Global Ambassador on Hunger.

“I just want to say that I’m very proud of this organization here in Chicago,” McGovern said, after receiving his award. “I know that it was close to Sarge’s heart. He can see the network of law firms tied together clearing their ideas and their work at a central clearinghouse like this, which we call the Shriver Center today.”

More than 600 guests joined the Shriver Center in honoring McGovern. This year marked the 40th anniversary of the Shriver Center, and McGovern’s presence and speech offered inspiration as well as a compelling call to action for

Event host television’s Sam Waterston joins keynote speaker and recipient of the Shriver Award for Equal Justice, the Honorable Senator George McGovern at the 2007 Annual Awards Dinner.



all in attendance. The event’s host was actor Sam Waterston, a longtime supporter of antipoverty organizations.

Information on the event, including photos and press materials are available online at www.povertylaw.org/about-us/newsroom.

Thanks again to all who contributed and attended. The event could not have been a success without you!

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Perspective by
John Bouman
**Something to Be
Thankful for**



Ten-year-old Lisa has struggled mightily with asthma. When she was younger, she had to be hospitalized several times a year. Her parents were worried sick about her and made sure she saw a specialist and obtained the right kinds of treatment and medicine. With the right treatment, Lisa's life became normal. She was concerned about playing soccer, not about losing the ability to breathe. Then her dad lost his job and his health insurance. He now works two jobs to pay the bills, but there is no health insurance. The family could not maintain Lisa's medicine all the time. She began to have asthma crises again. The family's desperation ended a little over a year ago when the family found out about All Kids, the new Illinois program that offers health coverage to every child in the state. With sliding-scale premiums and copayments, the All Kids program allows Lisa's parents to afford to have her covered with good insurance. She is well again and doing fine in school.

There are stories like Lisa's all over the state these days. If we look over the whole nation and examine the dreadful state of children's health coverage, we realize how advantaged we are in Illinois. The state was the first to cover all children. Illinois is the envy of the nation, and the state's leadership is

having an impact. Other states are following along. Most recently, Wisconsin adopted coverage for all children.

Illinois' leadership on covering children goes back at least ten years. There was a strong bipartisan implementation of KidCare, the Illinois version of the State Children's Health Insurance Program. Gov. George Ryan led an intense KidCare enrollment drive to make sure kids accessed the coverage. Another bipartisan effort led to the creation of FamilyCare, covering the parents of eligible children. Everyone understood that covering parents meant greater enrollment of children and increased preventive care for children. There has always been solid public support. In Illinois, covering children is the right thing to do. Gov. Rod Blagojevich rode this tide when he announced All Kids, and the General Assembly immediately embraced it. Everyone owns a piece of this success story.

The haze and the noise of the current Springfield battles should not obscure the history of cooperation and leadership that produced and maintains the All Kids program. We all need to remember that our state is capable of an All Kids success story, capable of leading the whole country. Lisa and all the Illinois kids like her know that this is a very big thing to be thankful for this year.

Disability Law Issues Covered in CLEARINGHOUSE REVIEW

Poverty, as well as the threat of poverty, disproportionately affects people with disabilities. Facing barriers such as unemployment or underemployment and exclusion from school, lacking necessary housing, or being denied access to health care, schools, or transportation, people with disabilities often need legal assistance. To help legal aid attorneys, advocates for people with disabilities, and other antipoverty advocates assist their low-income clients who have disabilities, the Shriver Center devoted its September–October 2007 CLEARINGHOUSE REVIEW: JOURNAL OF POVERTY LAW AND POLICY to a special issue entitled Legal Recourse for People with Disabilities.

Through this special issue, the Shriver Center aims to help advocates increase their awareness of the needs of clients with disabilities, identify relevant problems, develop effective legal strategies, gain current information in key substantive law areas, and learn about special considerations involved in representing clients with disabilities. Articles cover affordable housing, eviction defense, medicine and Medicare, Medicaid managed care, public benefits, the Americans with Disabilities Act, disability and work, school discipline, diminished capacity, age and disability, social security changes, protection of

40 THINGS YOU CAN DO TO HELP END POVERTY

Shriver Center Celebrates 40th Anniversary

Forty years ago Sargent Shriver launched a national movement that sought to mobilize all Americans to “participate directly, personally, and effectively” in the effort to make this world a better place in which to live. Each day each of us can make this vision a reality. To mark the 40th anniversary of the Shriver Center, we have compiled a list of 40 simple suggestions for anyone to undertake to embrace Shriver's values of leadership, innovation, service, and action.

*See www.povertylaw.org/advocacy/publications/40things
to find out what you can do to help end poverty in the United States.*

exempt benefits, lawsuits against states, immigrant eligibility for benefits, and the Protection and Advocacy network as a resource.

Because people with disabilities are disproportionately poor, legal aid attorneys and antipoverty advocates—regardless of their practice areas—are likely to meet clients or potential clients with disabilities. Attorneys and advocates need to begin to apply a “disability lens” to housing, consumer, health, public benefits, and other legal issues. In his introduction to the special issue, John Bouman, the Shriver Center president, writes:

“Advocates have come a long way in advancing the legal rights of people with disabilities. But we all need to think about, as a regular part of our practice, how we can use federal and state disability law—statutory, regulatory, and case law—to improve the lives of our clients.”

This issue of CLEARINGHOUSE REVIEW is offered as a means for legal aid and other antipoverty advocates to develop a fuller understanding of the legal needs of people with disabilities and how to apply disability law in a wider range of cases and more types of advocacy.”

Single copies of the special issue are \$30 each for nonprofit entities and \$60 each for others. Annual subscription prices are \$105 for Legal Services Corporation-funded advocates; \$250 for nonprofit entities (including small foundations and law school clinics); \$400 for individual private subscribers; and \$500 for a site license for law school libraries, law firm libraries, other law libraries, and foundations. The annual subscription price covers six hard-copy issues of CLEARINGHOUSE REVIEW and access via www.povertylaw.org to current issues of CLEARINGHOUSE REVIEW and all other issues from 1990.

For more information on Legal Recourse for People with Disabilities or on how to subscribe to CLEARINGHOUSE REVIEW and other Shriver Center publications, contact Nancy Carey at 312.363.3830 ext. 222.

Topics Announced for CLEARINGHOUSE REVIEW 2008 Special Issues

The Shriver Center will publish two special issues of CLEARINGHOUSE REVIEW: JOURNAL OF POVERTY LAW AND POLICY in 2008. The September–October issue will highlight various legal and policy issues affecting low-income people as they age, and the November–December issue will feature the Shriver Center’s 12-point agenda for ending poverty. In its 41st year of publication and published six times a year (in print and online), CLEARINGHOUSE REVIEW serves as the forum for sharing ideas, strategies, and best practices for using the law to offer solutions to poverty and sets the agenda for advocates seeking to end poverty in the United States.

Special Issue on Aging and the Law

As the number of people in the age group commonly referred to as “seniors” continues to increase dramatically, the number of legal aid clients in this age group will increase as will the range and complexity of issues that they and their advocates confront. Traditional substantive law areas such as housing, health care, disability, and social security present legal challenges to seniors and their advocates, but newer issues are emerging as well—for example, the risk of continuing waves of privatization, especially among health care agencies; legal rights of grandparents raising grandkids; and the increase in consumer and banking issues and other elder financial abuse tactics.

Using CLEARINGHOUSE REVIEW as a tool with which to increase awareness of and give information on many of these issues, the Shriver Center encourages advocates from across the nation to discuss legal issues affecting the aging low-income population. At the 2007 National Aging and Law Conference

in October, the Shriver Center led a roundtable discussion at which advocates helped start the planning of this special issue by contributing feedback and suggestions on which strategies, advocacy initiatives, and legal issues might be covered. Planning will continue through January 2008. For more information or to contribute ideas or suggestions, contact Shriver Center staff attorney–legal editor Catherine Dorn Schreiber at 909.793.2578 or cschreiber@povertylaw.org.

Special Issue on the Antipoverty Agenda

The release of the November–December issue will coincide roughly with the 2008 presidential election. How should the new president deal with poverty? What immediate steps might the president take to have the greatest impact on reducing the number of U.S. residents who are poor? Hope springs eternal at CLEARINGHOUSE REVIEW, and so the Shriver Center will be devoting the entire November–December 2008 issue to these questions by using the Shriver Center’s 12-point antipoverty agenda to frame and narrow the questions.

The Shriver Center invites advocates around the country to recommend antipoverty strategies that they have found successful, and the special issue will highlight an effective initiative in each area.

The Shriver Center’s 12-point Agenda to End Poverty:

1. Strengthen the Legal Foundation for Civil Rights and Racial Justice
2. Establish Affordable Quality Health Care for All
3. Guarantee Economic Safety for People with Employment Challenges
4. Invest in the Public Good Through Fair Budget and Tax Policies
5. Expand Low-Income Housing in Economically Diverse Communities
6. Create Redemptive

- Opportunities for People with Criminal Records
7. Increase Economic Mobility Through Lifelong Education
 8. Link Economic Development to Workforce Development Opportunities
 9. Advance Low-Wage Workers by Making Work Pay
 10. Build and Protect Assets for Financial Stability and Growth
 11. Protect Access to the American Dream for Immigrants and Refugees
 12. Ensure Economic Opportunity and Safety for Women and Girls

For more information about these points, see <http://www.povertylaw.org/advocacy/state-of-poverty-congressional-project/12-ways-to-lead-the-change.html>.

What antipoverty strategies would you recommend in any of these areas? The Shriver Center is seeking advocates who want to share ideas and help shape this issue. For more information or to offer ideas, contact Shriver Center senior attorney–senior editor Marcia Henry at marciahenry@povertylaw.org or 510.531.9142.

For CLEARINGHOUSE REVIEW subscription information, see www.povertylaw.org/clearinghouse-review/subscriptions/subscription-form.pdf.

CLEARINGHOUSE REVIEW Connects Advocates to the American Human Development Report

From the November–December 2007 issue of the Shriver Center’s CLEARINGHOUSE REVIEW, subscribers can learn about an important new expansion in the U.S. antipoverty movement. The first American Human Development Report will be released in April 2008; the project will pioneer the use of a United Nations methodology and approach to assess quality of life in an affluent country.

The CLEARINGHOUSE REVIEW article, “American Human Development Report 2008,” coauthored by Sarah Burd-Sharps, Kristen Lewis, Eduardo Borges Martins, and William M. Rodgers III, directors and key staff on the American Human Development project, describes the facets of this seminal report and offers several opportunities for advocates

“While data are plentiful on the extremes of affluence and deprivation in the United States, the Human Development Index (HDI) is a unique composite measure—a powerful snapshot of our society. The HDI holds a mirror up to our society on where we stand and, over time, monitors progress in overcoming social, economic, and environmental problems.”

to get involved. According to the authors, the fact-based nonpartisan report seeks to “engage Americans in a dialogue about the country’s future” and about how public policy and citizens’ participation in politics can work to overcome disadvantage.

Using official census data, the American Human Development Report will construct a Human Development Index (HDI), ranked by congressional district, state, gender, and

ethnic group. The report will feature a unique collection of statistical tables containing economic, social, political, environmental, military, and other data by state—statistics not compiled elsewhere in one publication. Project leaders will lead a 16-month broad, participatory process of consultation, research, and writing in order to promote informed public debate following the April 2008 release.

If you would like to learn more or get involved, here are a few suggestions:

- Share with project directors (right away) illustrations of effective policies, programs, or other relevant efforts that could be replicated elsewhere or that could inform national policy. If your story is featured in the report, you will be contacted to verify information.
- Become a partner organization and host an event, such as a presentation or policy discussion at launch time in April 2008.
- Participate in a Shriver Center–sponsored teleconference on the issues raised in this article in order to share readers’ experiences, reactions, and ideas. If you are interested in participating, send an e-mail to Ilze Hirsh, editor and vice president of communication programs, at ilzehirsh@povertylaw.org.
- Learn about American Human Development Report events by sending an e-mail to americanhdr@bigplanet.com.

For more information, contact Ilze Hirsh at Ilze-hirsh@povertylaw.org or Joanna VanderWoude, media relations associate, at jvanderwoude@povertylaw.org.



New Credential Program Affects Those with Felony Convictions

A relatively new federal security measure requires port workers and truck drivers to obtain credentials in order to access secure port facilities without escort. From now until December 2008, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) will be enrolling applicants into the Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC) program. The program will require an estimated 750,000 port workers and truck drivers to obtain tamper-resistant biometric credentials as Phase I implementation of provisions from the Maritime Transportation Security Act of 2002 and the SAFE (Security and Accountability For Every) Port Act of 2006.

As with many other security credential approval programs, criminal history affects TWIC program eligibility. The TSA plans to disqualify applicants with certain felony convictions. Application screening for the TWIC divides the universe of felonies into two categories: (1) permanent disqualifying criminal

offenses and (2) interim disqualifying criminal offenses. A “permanent disqualifying criminal offense,” such as espionage or murder, bars the applicant from the program, though subject to various exceptions. If the underlying crime is an “interim disqualifying criminal offense” (e.g., drug dealing, weapons possession), then the disqualification lasts for only seven years after the offense or five years after the applicant’s release, whichever event occurred later.

Fortunately, the TWIC program’s appeal and waiver provisions relieve the applicants a bit from these disqualifications. An appeal mechanism is available for denials based on inaccurate or incomplete information. This feature is especially useful because of TSA’s reliance on the Federal Bureau of Investigation “rap sheet”—a notoriously inaccurate and incomplete document—to judge an applicant’s criminal background. Indeed, the U.S. attorney general reports that 50 percent of the records do not indicate whether a case ended in a conviction or a dismissal. Moreover, the rap sheet does not distinguish between felonies (proper reason for denial) and misdemeanors (improper).

If a mistake on the rap sheet leads to a denial, then the applicant can appeal by presenting court documents reflecting the correct information to TSA.

Where the denial is based on correct information, applicants may find relief in TWIC’s waiver mechanism if the underlying crime is not espionage, treason, or similar offenses. To receive the waiver, the applicant must give to TSA evidence showing that the applicant “no longer poses a security threat.” Evidence of rehabilitation may include the length of time served, activities since release, and third-party references.

Advocates working to increase employment opportunities for ex-offenders should track the implementation of the TWIC program because it provides model strategies for expanding access to good jobs for those with criminal records. That is, the TWIC program offers a real second chance. The Shriver Center will help Chicago port workers, who face this new program beginning in mid-November, as they attempt to access the appeal and waiver rights process.

For more information, contact Marie Claire Tran at marieclairetran@povertylaw.org or 312.368.3308.

Illinois Governor Announces Expansion of Healthcare Program

In order to better meet the health care needs of Illinois’s low income families, Gov. Rod Blagojevich announced last month that eligibility for the FamilyCare program will be opened to families earning up to 400 percent of the federal poverty level. Effective immediately, the program is expanding adult income standards and establishing new rebate requirements and other procedures. For more details, see <http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=33712>.

The expansion of Illinois’s low-income health program comes at a significant time—when the health care needs of millions of Americans, particularly children, veterans, and seniors, is a contentious issue among federal legislators as well as within states. According to the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services, Governor Blagojevich’s program reform will increase access to health care for 147,000 uninsured parents. The income limit, now raised to 400 percent of the federal poverty level, currently equals \$82,600 for a family of four—increased from the current 185 percent of the federal poverty level, an annual income limit of \$38,202 for a family of four. Parents must be uninsured to qualify for the expansion or meet an exception, such as losing health care coverage as a result of a job loss.

What is FamilyCare?

FamilyCare offers health care coverage to parents living with their children 18 years old or younger. FamilyCare also covers relatives who are caring for children in place of their parents. FamilyCare covers doctor visits, limited dental care, hospital services, prescription drugs, durable medical equipment, and more. For more information, see <http://www.familycareillinois.com/>.

New Resource Details Unclaimed Federal Food Stamp Benefits

Urban areas are disproportionately home to America's poor and underfed, yet these regions lost what amounts to billions of dollars in unused federal food stamps during 2005. The Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) recently released a report tallying discarded food stamp dollars in 24 U.S. urban areas and major counties. The bottom line: over \$2.27 billion in unclaimed food stamps.

FRAC's region-by-region analysis allows for comparison of major urban locations based on poverty rates and program enrollment. Areas such as New York City, Los Angeles, Houston, and Chicago have not only some of the highest nationwide percentages of children in poverty but also the highest number of unused food stamp dollars. Cook County alone lost out on over \$160 million in federal food stamp dollars and ranks fourth in the nation in the amount of unused food stamp dollars.

Local economies lose out on federal food stamp dollars because eligible individuals do not participate in the Food Stamp Program. Although over three-quarters of Cook County's eligible residents participate in the program, more than 180,000 low-income Cook County residents are eligible but not receiving food stamps. Researchers have identified a number of possible explanations, including language barriers, stigma associated with getting public assistance, and understaffing of state welfare agencies that administer food stamps.

Lack of need, however, is certainly not an explanation. More than 20 percent of Chicagoans live in poverty. Almost 500,000 people each year rely on emergency and supplemental food from Cook County food pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters. Reliance on these Cook County agencies grows steadily. According to a Chicago Anti-Hunger Federation report, the number of those seeking food assistance in

Chicago rose 18 percent in 2006 alone.

State and local governments must do more to ensure that individuals benefit from this key antipoverty initiative. Food stamps are the first line of defense against hunger and malnutrition in the United States. And the cost burden on the state is next to nothing. Food stamp benefits are fully federally funded, and while states administer the program, the federal government shares close to half of the administrative costs.

Earlier this autumn, New York Gov. Elliot Spitzer announced an initiative to enroll an additional 200,000 individuals in the state's food stamp program. With this increased food stamp participation, New York's economy is expected to receive an additional \$200 million in federal funds. State and local leaders should follow this planned initiative closely and use the best practices in their own efforts to maximize food stamp participation.

The FRAC report is available online at <http://www.frac.org/pdf/UrbanFoodStamp07.pdf>.

Details about Governor Spitzer's Working Families Food Stamp Initiative can be found online at <http://www.ny.gov/governor/press/0927074.html>.

Shriver Center Represents Illinois in National Children's Health Care Project

Following President Bush's recent disappointing decision to veto the expansion of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), the Shriver Center gratefully received news that it would continue to participate in the Children's Health Coverage Narrative Communications Project. The project, funded by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, is an excellent opportunity for the

Shriver Center to join the national effort to ensure that appropriate, affordable health care for children remains a priority.

Participants in the project include advocates from across the country who fight for children's health care. In 2002 the Shriver Center's leadership and organizing efforts allowed for the implementation of FamilyCare, a health insurance program for parents of children at 185 percent of the federal poverty level. FamilyCare allows parents to receive federal and state insurance protections. The Shriver Center's continued participation in the Narrative Project is a unique chance to offer advice, exchange ideas, and maintain leadership in this fight on behalf of all children. The Shriver Center is thankful to be selected as the sole Illinois representative for the project.

To learn more, contact Joanna VanderWoude, media relations associate, at jvanderwoude@povertylaw.org.

Update: 2007 Congressional Scorecard

The Shriver Center is set to release its State of Poverty 2007 Congressional Scorecard in February 2008. A collaborative effort among Shriver Center staff and an advisory group of policy experts and advocacy leaders from across the nation, the second annual Congressional Scorecard will be a major resource for community members, policymakers, and advocates interested in the connections between policy and poverty.

Why a Scorecard?

The State of Poverty—America's most populous state—is made up of close to 37 million Americans who live in poverty. They face inadequate health care, lack of decent housing, hunger, and many other barriers to a stable, decent quality of life. Through the Shriver Center's State of Poverty Campaign, which incorporates the

Congressional Scorecard, the Shriver Center aims to engage and mobilize constituencies into antipoverty action. The Scorecard itself is an important tool with which to show how members of Congress have the ability and obligation to serve even their poorest constituents.

What Does the Congressional Scorecard Do?

The Shriver Center's Congressional Scorecard informs voters of each legislator's voting record and holds congressional members accountable for their actions regarding antipoverty legislation. As a comprehensive resource on policy actions, the Congressional Scorecard supports advocacy work. It also sets a benchmark for progress.

How Does the Congressional Scorecard Work?

Since January 2007, the Shriver Center has been tracking legislation on key issues including health care, immigration reform, and budget policy. This fall the Shriver Center narrowed the roster to around 30 pieces of legislation that Congress has voted on, with final cuts to be made in the coming month. The Congressional Scorecard will describe each piece of legislation and the Shriver Center's position and show a voting record for each member of Congress. Through the Scorecard, the Shriver Center will highlight how the 110th Congress has been handling the task of ending poverty in the United States.

When Can You Get Involved?

If you are an advocate or policymaker who would like to host an event, attend a teleconference, or learn more about the Scorecard, contact the project director, Natasha Eziquiel-Shriro at neziquielshriro@povertylaw.org, or call 312.263.3830 ext. 242. Press inquiries about the Scorecard can be directed to Joanna VanderWoude, media relations associate, at jvanderwoude@povertylaw.org or 312-263-3830 ext. 253.

Who Cares? We Do!

Stand with the Shriver Center in our effort to eradicate poverty! This year, thanks to a generous challenge grant from the Chicago Community Trust, your gift will be matched dollar for dollar, making your donation go further and do more than ever before!

Make no mistake; your support does make a difference. In particular, your tax-deductible donation will support our State of Poverty Campaign, which aims to make the eradication of poverty a national priority. It includes:

- *Publishing our annual Congressional Scorecard highlighting the voting records of all members of the U.S. Congress on antipoverty issues, which we distribute to thousands of civic leaders, policy makers, and media.*
- *Publishing a special issue of Clearinghouse Review: Journal of Poverty Law and Policy detailing our recommendations about what can be done on the federal and state levels to fight poverty.*
- *Continuing to create innovative public policies, undertake bold advocacy, and provide advice and support to grassroots advocates and legal aid attorneys around the country.*

**“We are optimists.
We believe that things can be
accomplished.... There is
delight in accepting
responsibility in a world
of men who shun it.”**

- Sargent Shriver

Each day, we transform into action the growing public will to confront poverty. Thank you for your support!

Visit www.povertylaw.org to make a donation.

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