

# STATE OF WESTERN NEW YORK ORGANIZING REPORT

“The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.” Nelson Mandela

**The beginning of 2010 brings us another set of crises, and in the world of organizing, opportunities. VOICE-Buffalo is committed to the continued struggle toward social justice.**

## The World

Haiti has been hit by a devastating earth quake and an aftershock quake. I, personally feel that whatever can be given should be given to the efforts to searching for people, caring for the hurt, sick, and weary. I know many have taken up offerings in congregations through out Western New York. This issue will be ongoing and gives us all pause about how important infrastructure really is. VOICE-Buffalo is committed to the global community. We are open to working with anybody interested in organizing an effort in regards to Haiti.

## Regional work

**Sprawl/Transportation Task Force** has met this year to continue working on prioritized bus shelters, fare equity and continued bus service. These are the local issues. In the meantime none will matter if we do not get national investment into transportation. We are working on the reauthorization of the jobs and transportation bill, and a creation of a Transportation Caucus in the White House.

Western New York Coalition for Regional Economic Revitalization – We are continuing to enforce the framework for Regional Growth by enacting a Bi-Regional Economic Development Commission. This body of people will provide expertise and the conscientiousness to wake up everyday with Regional Planning at the forefront of its mind. Grand Island as a beacon of light—This is a project that involves community organizing through faith institutions, a political, labor, and business investment that could result in smart growth policies and a greenway corridor.

**Budget Campaign** – Last year VOICE Buffalo took a position on the deep and severe cuts in the State Budget. We called it “In This Boat Together.” In order to address New York’s budget crisis, we released a statement and put public pressure on those in power to pass a moral budget. We will be in a similar predicament this year. We must keep this in the front of our minds.

VOICE-Buffalo pressured elected officials to maintain social programs that dominantly effect the poor and low income populations. In April of 2009 a Budget was passed that restored funding to both Health Care and Education.

## Local work

**Women and Children’s Task Force:** A committee was created out of the Clergy Caucus to gain **Full Restoration of funding to child care subsidies** that were recently proposed to be cut. This move will supposedly save 10 million dollars annually by decreasing the federal poverty level

from 200% to 125%. Essentially what this means is a family of 4 who makes a total household income of \$28K annually will now pay over \$700 in full for their child care, which is roughly 40% of annual income. Many of which will instead feel like they have no option but to not work and turn to welfare.

**Our principles: Dignity of work and rights of worker/business** – families have a right to work to provide for their families – without assistance for child care a number of families will need to quit work in order to care for their children. Businesses, especially small businesses, have a right to receive payment on time and provide a service needed in the area.

**Solidarity** – we as people of faith stand in solidarity with those families who are put into a precarious position of taking care of their children

This has become an ongoing issue of the County Executive cutting non mandated programs. This issue can be linked to other cuts, the WIC program, The East Side Public Health Care Clinics and the West Side Senior Centers. These are county wide issues and groups of allies are working on many if not all of these issues. Together we stand in solidarity.

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