

**VOICE-Buffalo
Public Statement
March 20th 2009**

In Response to Governor Paterson's 2009 Proposed Budget

VOICE-Buffalo is a faith-based community organizing project whose mission is to build community across the barriers that divide us and create power through organizing people to impact the political and economic decisions that shape their lives.

The member congregations and organizations of VOICE-Buffalo, along with all New Yorkers, recognize the historic and extreme dimensions of our state's current economic crisis. The collapse on Wall Street has devastated revenues and precipitated the need to cut expenses. In responding to this crisis our foundational commitment is to work for the common good. We affirm three principles in doing so. They are tied to expenses, revenue and the bottom line.

On the expense side, the least, last and lowest among us must not bear a disproportionate share of the sacrifice ahead. Too often the default position in our decision making around the allocation of resources has favored the wealthy at the expense of the poor, and the politically connected at the expense of those who are disconnected from the political process. Those least able to sustain cuts in critical services should be the last to have to do so.

On the revenue side, we affirm the principle that those who have enjoyed the greatest benefit from our economic system are in the best position to contribute toward addressing the current crisis. Strategies for increasing revenue must be progressive rather than regressive in nature.

Working for the common good of all New Yorkers in these hard times requires sacrifices of us all. The bottom line is putting a human face on financial decisions and working for equity in sharing the blessings and the burdens of those decisions.

Our faith traditions compel us to participate in the public arena. We can't do this by retreating to our respective corners and watching others define our destiny. We can only do this through active engagement in public life, recognizing, as Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. reminds us, that "we are all tied in a single garment of destiny."