



Interfaith **IMPACT** of New York State

## IINYS ACTION ALERT

November 27, 2009

### Thanksgiving Week Press Conference Focuses on Growing Problem of Hunger

#### One Out of Five Children in NYS Experience Food Insecurity

**Food insecurity.** That's the term the Federal government uses when it talks about *hunger*. Food insecurity means more than an empty stomach. It means children going without the food they need to sustain their growing bodies and minds, elderly men and women without the food they need to survive, and ever longer lines waiting for the doors to open at poorly funded breakfast programs.

During this holiday season from now to the end of the year, we can let our legislators know that we are concerned about hunger.

On Monday, Interfaith Impact participated in a press conference called in Albany by the NYS Hunger Action Network and the Faith and Hunger Network. Hearing from those who feed the poor was a wake-up call at the start of this celebratory season.

"The problem of food insecurity in our state is becoming an urgent public policy issue," said Robb Smith, Executive Director of Interfaith Impact of NYS. "NYS lawmakers are presently considering millions of dollars in proposed cuts to feeding programs, along with deep cuts to other human service initiatives dealing with housing and health care. This is unacceptable."

"One thing each of us can do this season is to communicate with our legislative representatives to let them know that we care about the growing problem of hunger in our state," he continued. "Let them know that as they work on deficit reduction, cutting food for the hungry is not an option."

During the past two years, **one child out of five experienced food insecurity in New York.** This season, emergency food programs across the state are feeding record number of individuals. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, in New York, more than one out of ten households experienced low or very low food security during the past two years, and households with very low food security (severe hunger) jumped from 3.1% to 4.3%, which is statistically significant.

New York is not alone. Nationally last year, the number of children in food-insecure households increased by five million over the year before, to a total of 17 million children. More than 22 percent of all children in our country faced uncertainty in getting enough to eat.

At the Faith and Hunger press conference, Crystal Hamelink, Director of the Schenectady Inner City Ministry free summer lunch program, which helped provide nearly 38,000 lunches to hungry kids last summer, noted a 24% increase over last year. "Our kids are most vulnerable," she said. "When you feed hungry children, they wrap themselves around your heart. It's a blessing to feed the children. It's unfortunate that the numbers of hungry kids keep growing."

Earl Eichelberger, Director of Charities for the NYS Catholic Conference, called poverty in the United States "a moral and social wound in the soul of our country."

Rev. Debra Jamison, Director of the FOCUS churches food program, said, "As people of faith, we are called to do what God requires. The good news is, there is enough food! The challenge we face is finding a more equitable way of distributing food and government leadership committed to making certain no one goes hungry."

Lawmakers need to do a better job of finding the resources needed to reduce hunger, and each of us can help.

You can leave a message for Governor Paterson at 518-474-8390. The phone number for the NYS Senate switchboard is 518-455-2800. The Assembly information number is 518-455-4100. Just give the operator the name of your Senator or Assembly Member. (If you are not sure who your legislators are, go to "Find Your Legislator" under the "Resources" button at [www.interfaithimpactnys.org](http://www.interfaithimpactnys.org).)

Legislators and the Governor are working on a deficit reduction bill now and thinking about what they are going to be cutting next year, so this is a good time to call.

**INTERFAITH IMPACT OF NEW YORK STATE: WORKING FOR THE COMMON  
GOOD THROUGH PROGRESSIVE RELIGIOUS ADVOCACY**  
**[WWW.INTERFAITHIMPACTNYS.ORG](http://WWW.INTERFAITHIMPACTNYS.ORG)**

**Board of Directors:** The Rev. Dr. Richard S. Gilbert (President), Donald Odell (Secretary), John E. Keevert (Treasurer), Kenneth Bollerud, The Rev. Steve Clunn, The Rev. Dr. Tom Davis, Herbert Gordon, Eileen Hamlin, Harsey Leonard, The Rev. Robert Linder, Damaris McGuire, The Rev. Paul Rees-Rohrbacher, Niels Schulz, The Rev. Sam Trumbore, Barbara Zaron. **Clergy Advisory Board:** The Rev. Kaaren Anderson, The Rev. Kenneth I. Applegate, The Rev. Dr. Lynn Ashley, Rabbi Henry Bamberger, The Rev. Johanna Barrett, The Rev. Michelle Bogue-Trost, The Rev. Ben Bortin, The Rev. Stephen C. Butler, The Rev. Dr. Thomas A. Chulak, Rabbi Matthew Cutler, Rabbi Jerome K. Davidson, D.D., Rabbi Joshua M. Davidson, The Rev. Larry A. Deyss, The Rev. Linda Dolby, Rabbi Debora S. Gordon, The Rev. Dr. Paula J. Gravelle, Rabbi Daniel Gropper, The Rev. Margaret Hart, Rabbi Alan J. Katz, Rabbi Lawrence A. Kotok, The Rev. Robert C. Lamar, The Rev. Dr. William A. Lasher, The Rev. Christopher Luedde, Pastor Alexandra S. Lusak, The Rev. John Magisano, Rabbi Linda Motzkin, The Rev. Dr. Hugh Nevin, The Rev. Larry Phillips, Rabbi Daniel Polish; The Very Rev. David Robinson; Rabbi Harry Rosenfeld; Rabbi Jonathan Rubenstein; Rabbi Scott Shpeen; The Rev. Bruce Southworth; The Rev. Dr. Charles H. Straut, Jr., The Rev. Scott Taylor, The Rev. David Weissbard, The Rev. Wade Wheelock, Rabbi Michael A. White, The Rev. Robert A. White. **Executive Director:** Robb Smith

**Interfaith Impact of NYS, 646 State Street, Albany, NY 12203; Phone: 518-463-5654;**  
**[info@interfaithimpactnys.org](mailto:info@interfaithimpactnys.org); [www.interfaithimpactnys.org](http://www.interfaithimpactnys.org); [www.interfaithimpact.wordpress.com](http://www.interfaithimpact.wordpress.com)**