

# Interfaith Impact of NYS Action Alert

## More Help for the Poor Needed in Governor's Budget

As Governor Paterson puts the finishing touches on his budget, IINYS is working with the Faith and Hunger Network (FHN) to maintain pressure for more help for the poor. Last week, IINYS took part in a FHN press conference at Emmanuel Baptist Church in Albany, which hosts the FOCUS Churches Food Pantry. (A story in the 12-1-2008 [Legislative Gazette](#) gives a good summary.)

Over the past three months, IINYS and other FHN members have met with David Hansell, Commissioner of the NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (public assistance), and with the Executive Chamber's budget analysts for health and human services. Next week, we will meet in the Executive Chamber with Joe Baker, the Governor's Deputy Secretary for Health and Human Services, and Dennis Whalen, the Governor's Director of Operations. Here's how you can help:

1. Call Governor Paterson as soon as possible and urge him to support an increase in the state welfare grant. ( Background: The overall welfare grant is now less than 50% of the federal poverty level. The basic welfare grant of \$291 a month for a family of 3 has not been raised in 18 years.) Since the Governor will be releasing his proposed budget on Dec. 16, the final decisions have to be made in the next few days so they have time to print it before it is released. We understand that the Governor is seriously considering at least some increase in welfare benefits but the final decision will be made in the next few days. The usual comment line for such issues is in Albany at 518 474-8390 though the Governor and his top staff usually work out of his NYC office at 212 681-4580. Tell the person who answers the phone that you want the Governor to raise the basic welfare grant in the State budget. Normally they just write down the issue and ask for your zip code. These calls add up and can help push an issue over the top.

2. You are invited to join IINYS and the Faith and Hunger Network in a prayer vigil for low-income New Yorkers this Wednesday, December 10th at noon on the second floor of the Capitol outside of the Governor's office. We will spend an hour reflecting and reading prayers from various faith traditions that speak to the need for our society to help raise up those less fortunate.