

ACORN Makes Impact in Washington D.C.

March 14, 2007

ACORN members from across the United States traveled to Washington D.C. this week to attend the ACORN Legislative Conference to rally and lobby lawmakers on issues like Katrina relief, paid sick days, comprehensive immigration reform and predatory lending as well as budget priorities such as funding for housing, heating assistance and health and childcare programs.

About 650 ACORN members attended rallies and events voicing their concerns on issues that impact low-to-moderate communities around the country.

On Monday, March 12, about 100 ACORN members participated in the "Rally for Katrina Relief and Rebuilding" outside the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Chanting "New Orleans must rise again," the group demanded that FEMA demonstrate flexibility in handling the housing needs of residents still displaced 18 months after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Longtime ACORN member Gwendolyn Adams, one of 10 members from New Orleans attending the conference, said, "We are letting FEMA know that it is unfair to put people out when they don't have housing options."

Adams, co-chair of the Lower 9th Ward chapter, added, "People did not cause this to happen, and we've been paying taxes all our lives and want to reap the benefits of our taxes."

On Tuesday, the conference's busiest day, four events were held with busloads of hundreds of ACORN members from along the East Coast arriving that day.

The "Pass the Healthy Families Act" rally, which marked the bill's introduction to Congress, was held outside of the Russell Senate Office building on the Capitol lawn. ACORN is calling on Congress to require employers of 15 or more to provide a minimum of seven paid sick days for workers to use themselves or to care for an ill loved one.

About 600 ACORN members attended the event, where Senator Ted Kennedy and Representative Rosa DeLauro and ACORN member Bertha Brown spoke out about the importance of American workers having paid sick time off.



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"I have paid sick leave. The president has paid sick leave. Every member of Congress has paid sick leave and you should have paid sick leave too," Kennedy said. "It's good for the economy."

DeLauro added, "It's a basic right in the workplace to have paid sick leave."

ACORN member Bertha Brown, a home care worker from Philadelphia who has no paid sick leave, told the crowd, "When I am forced to send my kids to school sick because I can't afford to miss the pay, we both suffer. How can I choose between my kids and the job that I can't afford to lose."



The "No Fee Increase for Citizenship," rally at the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services building on March 13, brought together African-American and Latinos calling on a comprehensive immigration reform plan.

The "No Fee Increase for Citizenship" rally was an exciting event held at the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services building, which brought together African-American and Latinos calling on a comprehensive immigration reform plan. Speakers waved ACORN flags, carried signs with messages to Congress about fixing the broken system as well as spoke passionately about providing a path to citizenship for the estimated 12 million undocumented immigrants currently living in the U.S.

The "First Things First Rally! Emergency Campaign for America's Priorities (ECAP)" focused on the Bush budget and was attended by leaders of the Senate and House at the U.S. Capitol. ACORN is part of a coalition of national and grassroots organizations called the Emergency Campaign for America's Priorities, organizing to reverse the Administration's plan to cut programs that primarily benefit the poor and middle class in order to give tax benefits to the wealthy and special interests. Bush's proposed tax cuts total \$739 billion.

"We need things for the needy and not the greedy," said New York ACORN president, Pat Boone at the rally.

The President's \$302 billion budget would eliminate urgently needed funds for 250,000 children in need of child care; nine million children in need of state health insurance (SCHIP); one million low-income households in need of home-heating and cooling assistance (LIHEAP); and 40,000 to 80,000 households in need of rental vouchers.

Medicaid would be cut by \$13 billion over five years through legislative proposals plus an additional \$12.7 in administrative actions not requiring legislation. Community Development Block Grants are to be reduced from \$4.17 to \$3.04 billion. Section 8 Vouchers have been cut by 150,000 since 2004 and will be cut further, from 40,000 to 80,000. Finally, 300,000 low-income families will lose Food Stamps through \$600 million in cuts over the next five years.

"Congress must act now to appropriate \$450 billion and fully fund these vital domestic programs, rejecting outrageous and unnecessary tax breaks for wealthy individuals," said ACORN President Maude Hurd.

The "Stop Foreclosures: Make Wall Street Pay up" action against investors who have bankrolled predatory lending practices was held at the Mortgage Bankers Association's Office. More than 150 ACORN members stormed the building demanding that the mortgage bankers and the industry reform its lending practices.

After meeting with ACORN National president Maude Hurd and California ACORN board member Chris Jones, Paul Green, the Vice president of the Mortgage Bankers Association agreed to meet with ACORN before April 6 to discuss the group's concerns

"This is a great victory for us," Hurd said. "We are hoping this is a move to help save millions of families from facing foreclosure."