



Shaping Policy...  
Creating Opportunities



Missouri Association for Social Welfare

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## **CENSUS REPORT SHOWS 742,000 MISSOURIANS LIVING IN POVERTY, STATE'S MEDIAN INCOME DECREASED \$5,432 SINCE 2001**

***No Progress in MO on Poverty, Health Coverage or Family Incomes Since 2001 Recession***

St. Louis & Jefferson City, MO – An increased number of Missourians were living in poverty and bringing home less income to support their families in 2007, according to a report released today by the United States Census Bureau. Missourians were more likely to be poor and lack health coverage last year, before we entered the current economic downturn, than when the last recession bottomed out in 2001.

**The number of impoverished Missourians is now 742,000, up from 659,000 in 2006, and an increase of 2.7 percent since 2001. The median income in our state fell from 51,356 in 2001 to 45,924 during 2007 when adjusted for inflation. Missouri's drop in income from 2001 to 2007 was the second largest in the nation, behind only Minnesota. The Census Bureau also found that 729,000 Missourians did not have health care coverage in 2007, an increase of 3.5 percent from 2001.**

“It is very discouraging that Missouri actually lost ground last year in the key areas of poverty, health coverage and family income,” said Amy Blouin, Executive Director of the Missouri Budget Project. “This leaves Missouri families ill prepared to weather the tough economic times we are now facing.”

“Many families in Missouri are finding it harder and harder just to make ends meet in the face of rising gas and food prices,” said Bob Quinn, Executive Director of the Missouri Association for Social Welfare. “These challenges are made even more difficult since Missouri's working families are actually bringing home less income now than they were in 2001.”

**In Missouri, at least 19,100 jobs have been lost since January of this year, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and 171,541 Missourians were unemployed as of July 2008.** Not only has the unemployment rate increased, but the number of people who are unemployed for an extended period of time (longer than six months) has also increased. It is estimated that 62,000 Missourians will face long term unemployment over the next year.

If the current economic downturn continues as expected, poverty rates in Missouri could show an even more significant increase for 2008 and 2009. With job losses, decreased incomes and health coverage, and an increase in the number of impoverished families, Missouri could also see an increased need by families for state services.

Missouri's elected officials will face tough choices during the next legislative session about how to adequately fund state services, including the need to increase access to health care for many Missourians who lost it during the 2005 cuts, as the state braces for a projected \$680 million budget shortfall by Fiscal Year 2011, as well as a \$700 million transportation budget shortfall.

"Missouri's new Governor and State Legislature must work across party lines next year to ensure critical state services are available to our state's residents during these tough economic times," said Blouin and Quinn. "We should strive to decrease the number of Missourians who are living in poverty and work to enact policies that increase Missourian's incomes and access to health care, to keep our state a desirable place to live and work."

**The Missouri Budget Project (MBP) and the Missouri Association for Social Welfare (MASW) are non-profit, non-partisan policy analysis and advocacy organizations.**

Newly released U.S. Census poverty data for 2007 is available at [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov).

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*The Mission of the Missouri Budget Project is: To advance public policies that improve economic opportunities for all Missourians – particularly low and middle-income families – by providing reliable and objective research, public education and advocacy. More information is available at [www.mobudget.org](http://www.mobudget.org).*

*The Missouri Association for Social Welfare is a 107 year-old social justice organization whose mission is to provide leadership, research, education and advocacy to improve public policies and programs impacting the health and welfare of all people in Missouri. [www.masw.org](http://www.masw.org)*