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Census: Number of Poor Missourians Remains High

Hardship Continues as Missouri Fails to Make Investments that Reduce Poverty

Poverty remained high and incomes fell in Missouri last year, showing the continuing pain of the recession and underscoring the need for Missouri to do more to help struggling people and give them the tools to lift themselves out of poverty. About 1 in 6 Missourians, and more than 1 in 5 Missouri children, lived in poverty in 2012, according to new Census Bureau data released today. The median annual income in Missouri adjusted for inflation fell between 2011 and 2012.

Since the recession, Missouri lawmakers have cut funding for schools, colleges, and other key services that build a strong economy with good jobs that can help struggling families climb into the middle class. Tax cuts like those included in HB 253, which some legislators have promised to revive in 2014, will only make matters worse.

"Cutting important investments in education and infrastructure is not the way to boost our economy or lift people out of poverty," said Amy Blouin, Executive Director of the Missouri Budget Project. "Missouri needs an economic policy that provides all Missourians the tools they need to overcome poverty and provide for their families."

Help for struggling families from the state and federal government has been found to have long-term payoffs for kids, including better school performance, higher earnings as adults, and better health outcomes. Tax cuts would undermine Missouri's ability both to invest in these services and to create middle class jobs.

"Tax cuts like those passed in the last session will only make it harder for Missourians to achieve or maintain a middle class existence," continued Blouin. "To help both families and businesses succeed, our state needs quality schools, affordable world-class colleges, and a reliable and efficient transportation infrastructure. Tax cuts would compromise these services at a time when we really need to invest more in order to compete in a 21st century economy."

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