

# PLENTY



## “Only a bill”: How legislation gets done...

*“I’m just a bill.  
Yes, I’m only a bill.  
And I’m sitting here on Capitol Hill.”*

Remember this jingle? “School House Rock—How a bill becomes a law” is a song (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mEJL2Uuv-oQ>) produced for service-dedicated television in the 70’s. Obviously pitched toward kids, yet it also served as a quick tutorial about the machinations of government for the rest of us. The larger purpose behind it was to teach youngsters about public process of decision-making, creating greater awareness about how legislation works:

But the song stopped short of providing a truly complete overview of lawmaking: it did not include the initial steps through which an idea becomes a bill, and its scope was limited to a description to the federal system only. But a song, of course, has a finite number of verses to describe differences in legislating between national and local government.

For organizations dedicated to influencing legislation, distinctions between Washington and Columbus begin by required registration in Ohio with the Joint Legislative Ethics Committee which monitors lobbying activities. The Hunger Network in Ohio (HNO) has been thereby positioned for over 32 years to influence with both State legislators and administration as a spokes-organization for churches. We currently represent more than 2500 Ohio congregation and advocate for countless state bills relevant to hunger and poverty.

While taking a stance on existing legislation is always important, the HNO has “moved upstream” to become directly involved in generating new legislation. We are on a state-level focusing as well on moving good ideas through state government to become, according to School House Rock, “only a bill.”

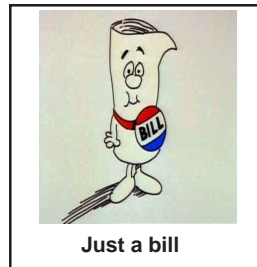
HNO’s most recent attempt to form public policy began three years ago at a Poverty Summit in Columbus, organized by the Ohio Association of Community Action Organizations and co-sponsored by the then Strickland Administration. The direct product of that assembly of “advocates for the ‘poor’” was the formation of the Ohio Anti-poverty Task Force (see page 8 of “Plenty and Scarcity” 2011: [www.HungerNetOhio.org](http://www.HungerNetOhio.org) under “Resources” for more detail). At that time we participated in a working group that culminated in leading to “Strategic Recommendations for Expanding Opportunity and Reducing Poverty.”

Strengths of the Task Force report are many-fold:

- it is the most comprehensive approach to poverty in many years, if ever, in Ohio;
- it contains very specific recommendation, not only to increase accessibility of impoverished Ohioans to service, but save money;
- it was done thoroughly over a 10 month period, representing the thinking of over 2000 contributors across the State;
- Many parts are immediately implementable;
- it is a high-quality produce completed with expert leadership and bi-partisan cooperation.

Yet, those 22 short-term and 26 long-term recommendations seemed to evaporate soon after completion. Without an implementation plan these promising possibilities were suspended.

HNO has never given up on the inherent value of this study and its potential for at least some recommendations eventually becoming implemented. Since the September 10, 2008 full release of those proposals, we have doggedly informed, coaxed, and pressed State legislators to revisit and reconsider them. HNO has joined with church advocates, food pantry volunteers and clients, and anti-hunger and poverty-focused agencies, visiting almost every offices of the House of Representatives and Senate, finding many unaware but most interested in the OAPTF research and recommendations.



Despite our dedication, substantive progress was slow until November 4<sup>th</sup> when, responding to the enthusiasm of two aides, Sen. Capri Cafaro saw merit in the Report and took up the cause. Ms Cafaro, who is minority leader, issued a call to “all Democrats and all Republicans” to join with her as “Anti-Poverty” co-sponsors (see page 2). At the time of this writing, six senators have signed-on as the window for endorsements remains open to encourage a maximum response. The next step will be to return with greater detail and any negotiated modifications to the bi-partisan Legislative Services Commission. The Commission will help remodel the initial ideas into a final form, assign it to a committee, expose it to public scrutiny, and—if it succeeds—to the full Senate and onto the House for more testimony and a vote.

Throughout upcoming weeks and months, we need anti-poverty advocates to call and visit uncommitted Senators with the message of the importance of this legislation. Facing uphill odds and unassured prospects, we encourage you to join with us in this quest to move “only a bill” into a law.

# Sen. Cafaro introduces antipovertry initiative

## Antipovertry Task Force

“STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXPANDING OPPORTUNITY AND REDUCING POVERTY IN OHIO” was produced in the latter half of the previous administration by the Ohio Antipovertry Task Force (OAPTF). Its thirty members included state agency representatives, faith-based and community non-profit leaders, Ohioans living in poverty, business and labor leaders, and key anti-poverty stakeholders from around the state. Additionally, over three hundred Ohioans were involved in the five work groups of the Task Force. Over 1800 Ohioans, many of whom are low-income, participated in one of twenty-two Regional Conversations on Reducing Poverty. The work of the OAPTF was completed in two distinct phases, the first producing twenty-three shorter term recommendations and the second phase resulted in the series of longer term recommendations.

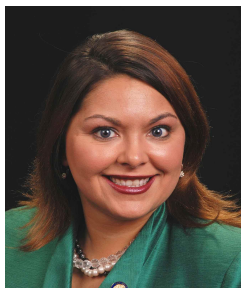
Relying upon solid demographic data, the body of the Report is divided into four main categories:

I. *Create Opportunities for Economic Advancement.* Encourage, enable, and support sustainable movement up the economic ladder for Ohioans living in poverty, as well as those who are at risk of falling into poverty, through training and employment opportunities.

II. *Establish Foundational Stability.* Provide for the basic needs of Ohioans living in poverty, as well as those who are at risk of falling into poverty, in order to prevent additional hardships, stabilize their current economic situation, and prepare them to take advantage of opportunities that lead to economic advancement.

III. *Invest in Children and Young Adults.* Further invest in children and young adults in an effort to reverse the tide of generational poverty.

IV. *Ensure Transparency, Accountability, and Leadership.* Ensure progress is accountable, investments are uniformly measured, information is made public, and ongoing interagency leadership is effective.



Sen. Cafaro

On November 4<sup>th</sup> Ohio Senator Capri Cafaro (D32) called “all Democrats; all Republicans” in the Senate to join her in cosponsoring a bill that could drastically reduce poverty in Ohio through putting more Ohioans back to work. According to Brittany Boulton, her Legislative Aide, Senator Cafaro has been considering introducing legislation based on recommendations made by the Ohio Anti-Poverty Task Force and the recent report from the Brookings Institute has made such legislation even more relevant to our state. She said that, in addition to providing crucial safety net services to those in need, it is important that we combat poverty at a systemic level by strengthening Ohio’s workforce and helping the unemployed and hard-to-employ get back to work.

The Anti-Poverty Legislation that will include:

- **Creation of an Anti-Poverty Council** that would implement Transitional Jobs programs and encourage state contractors to provide *Transitional Jobs* as employment and training options. The Council would NOT be created for the purposes of study. It would exist to actively combat poverty through such previously studied methods as those recommended by The Anti-Poverty Task Force. It would include state agency officials in order to ensure statewide coordination of anti-poverty measures across state agencies and regions
- **Creation of a Social Entrepreneurship Initiative** as a one-stop resource for those seeking to start up such ventures that would also serve as a micro-lending host and loan development for socially-minded small businesses. It would highlight existing social entrepreneurship initiatives and best practice information. And it would coordinate investment strategies at relevant state agencies around innovative and proven social entrepreneurship initiatives

## Poverty: Conditions/Remedies

The Census Bureau this fall put numbers to the personal suffering wreaked by the economy. The nation’s poverty rate climbed to 14.3 percent in 2009 — capturing another 3.7 million people. The increase — the third in three years — means one in seven Americans is now living below the government-defined poverty line: Less than \$21,954 for a family of four and \$10,956 for an individual. According to that measure, there are 1.7 million people living in poverty in Ohio. And with more than eight million jobs lost since the recession started in December 2007, working-age men and women are joining the ranks of the poor at a clip not seen since the 1960s.

The recent recession exacerbated many of these long-term trends. Although the recession affected all Americans, disadvantaged workers with less education and fewer job-related skills experienced particularly high rates of job loss during this period, and many remain unemployed today. For instance, in 2010 the unemployment rate for people over the age of twenty-five without a high school diploma was 14.9 percent. Anti-poverty advocates urges Ohio lawmakers to enact policies that will allow more Ohioans to become self-sufficient. Here are some recently released studies that broaden the understanding of what it means to be “down and out” in Ohio and what to do about it: The State of Poverty in Ohio 2011: A Path to Recovery; The Self Sufficiency Standard for Ohio 2011; [http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/cats/income\\_expenditures\\_poverty\\_wealth/poverty.html](http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/cats/income_expenditures_poverty_wealth/poverty.html); <http://www.brookings.edu/topics/u-s-poverty.aspx>; [www.development.ohio.gov/research/files/p700000000.pdf](http://www.development.ohio.gov/research/files/p700000000.pdf)

The portion of the Task Force Recommendations that Senator Cafaro will introduce is included on pages 8-11 (Expansion of Transitional Jobs and Social Entrepreneurship). The Council would be tasked with implementation and oversight of the Transitional Jobs model and Social Entrepreneurship Initiative.

## “To do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God”

- *The telephone rings, and a recorded message urges me to tell my Senator to stop hurting senior citizens.*
- *A flurry of television ads, often playing back to back, tell us in quick succession that one policy is against big business, another attacks small business, yet another represents irresponsible spending, while a fourth unfairly targets necessary social programs.*
- *The emerging campaigns have the appearance more of demolition derbies than of thoughtful discussions and explorations of the public policies that will most effectively address the crucial problems facing our country, our states, our cities and towns, and our neighborhoods.*

*In short we live in a time of the “shout out” and the “slap down”.*

*In the midst of this strident and noisy environment your Hunger Network in Ohio has been consistently and tirelessly pursuing its business of building relationships between legislators and constituents, creating settings for listening, and working for realistic policies to reduce hunger in Ohio.*

*We do not wear our religion on our sleeve. But we are guided always by the Biblical vision that the community is not well until every individual is well. Scripture is replete with examples of provision being made for the hungry, the unclothed, the unsheltered, the outsider. ... In short, to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly.*

**We must now ask for your renewed and increased support. HNO depends entirely on three revenue sources to carry forward its work: 2 Cents a Meal, several small denominational grants, and contributions like yours. Over the last 18 months each revenue stream has shrunk significantly, and we have nearly depleted the very small cash reserve we carried into this year. Our very modest \$36,000 annual budget supports our half time Executive Director and educational work. As of October 31 our receipts are 30% below year to date budget. The results of this year end appeal will in part determine the course we set for the future.**

*The Board is mindful of the trust you, through your previous support, have placed in us to carry forward this important work. And we are profoundly grateful that your partnership has allowed us to continue doing it. We will work faithfully to proceed as wisely as possible with your continued support.*

*If you need any further information, please contact any of us through the address, email address, or telephone number above.*

*Fred Kinne Board Chair*



**Especially with the possibility of staff reduction, many of our administrative tasks will need to be shifted to volunteers. Here is a list of jobs:**

File maintenance. Data bases require continuous attention. This includes adding new names as they come in and updating existing information following each emailing. We, of course, maintain organizational policies, correspondence, finances, board and other archival records.

Correspondence Assistance. We stay in constant touch with our constituents such as seeking information, answering questions, acknowledging gifts, and overall exchanges.

Legislative appointments setup. Regular Tuesday at the Statehouse visits require making calls to schedule appointments and following-through on acknowledgments afterward. It also involves keeping files on each legislator including histories of contacts and notes on exchanges.

Issues Research. We regularly gather details on hunger and poverty-related news items and are constantly aware of the status of public policies and active legislation.

Writing proofing/editing. Writers are needed for HungerNetOhio email alerts which are sent once or more times each month. Additionally, editors, writers, and proof-readers are required for newsletters, hunger issues discussion booklets, advocacy devotional calendars, and promotional materials.

Media Design/Formatting. Persons with experience “Pagemaking” (In-Design or equivalent) capabilities are sought to create, format, supplemental graphics most communications. On a larger scale are the creation of portable poster and display panels.

Social Media Contacts. Technical skills are required to further develop electronic exchange mechanism including website, Face Book, Twitter supervision.

Church/public engagements. Invitations and opportunities for exhibits and speakers throughout the State call for persons who are available, familiar with the program, and articulate in diverse groups and settings.

Board Representation. We have openings for Trustees who represent partner judicatories in overseeing the operations of this organization. We’ve also slots for members-at-large.

# Please help us by answering some questions



The Hunger Network in Ohio is reviewing a broad range of its activities to assess and improve its effectiveness. This is the first of two opportunities for you to assist us. You may help us review our electronic communications by immediately copying the following link to your web browser and taking a brief 10 question survey: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/MG7CZ9K>. Or you may respond to a second request arriving within the next few days. In either case, your responses will be anonymous unless you choose to enter your name or contact information in the final Comment Box. Thank you again for your partnership in this important work of eliminating hunger in Ohio.

1. Which statement most accurately represents your relationship with HNO?
  - I am familiar with the work of HNO and want to receive e-mail alerts and other materials.
  - I have heard about HNO but don't fully understand its work.
  - I care about hunger but am not comfortable with public policy.
  - I don't really know much about HNO and don't know how I got on the e-mail list.
  - Seasonal devotional materials - hunger awareness, Advent, Lent
  - 2 Cents a Meal prayers and Bible texts
  - Helpful links on hunger
  - I never use the webpage
2. How did you learn about HNO?
  - My parish church
  - Presentation or display at a church meeting
  - A church newsletter or publication
  - From a friend
  - Don't know
3. In the past have you ever (Check all that apply.)
  - Met with an elected official (by yourself or in a group)
  - Called an elected official
  - Written a letter to an elected official
  - E-mailed an elected official
  - Help organize a parish forum or neighborhood meeting to discuss a public policy issue
  - Participated in a rally in support of or against an issue
  - Written a letter to the editor
  - Written an opinion piece for your church newsletter or bulletin
  - None of these
4. With more information or training, would you like to (Check all that apply.)
  - Met with an elected official (by yourself or in a group)
  - Called an elected official
  - Written a letter to an elected official
  - E-mailed an elected official
  - Help organize a parish forum or neighborhood meeting to discuss a public policy issue
  - Participated in a rally in support of or against an issue
  - Written a letter to the editor
  - Written an opinion piece for your church newsletter or bulletin
  - None of these
5. I go to <http://www.hungernetohio.org/> for.... (Check all that apply.)
  - Research on hunger related public policy issues
  - Information on how to contact and talk to my elected representatives
  - Educational resources for church school, adult education, or other parish programs
  - Sunday worship resources - Hunger Awareness Month
6. I read the HungerNetOhio e-mail alerts
  - Always
  - Frequently
  - Occasionally
  - Seldom
  - Never
7. How often would you like to receive e-mail alerts from HNO?
  - Weekly
  - Every two weeks
  - Monthly
  - Every six weeks
  - Only as public policy or educational needs require
  - Prefer not to receive any
8. What kinds of information are you most interested in receiving? (Check all that apply.)
  - Urgent action alerts
  - Background on State and National legislative issues
  - Information on State and National events (rallies, conferences, legislative days, etc.)
  - Lifestyle and community consciousness raising information
  - Home devotional and study resources
  - Sunday worship resources
  - Parish education materials
  - Other (please specify)
9. What would help you feel more comfortable meeting, phoning, or writing your elected representatives? (Check all that apply.)
  - A template for how to make a call, write a letter, or set up a meeting in the local district
  - More background materials
  - Talking points on an issue
  - I will not contact my elected representatives or their staffs.
  - Other (please specify)
10. Are there other comments you would like to make?

The mission of the Hunger Network in Ohio is to **end hunger in Ohio** and strategy to **change condition which cause poverty**. Sponsors include the Eastminster Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church USA, the Episcopal Church Dioceses of Ohio and Southern Ohio; Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Synods of Northeast and Southern Ohio; United Church of Christ, Central-Southeast Association; and the United Methodist Church East and West Ohio Conference. Information about hunger issues, training for advocacy, and opportunities to work for economic justice are available. The organization is funded primarily through 2 cents-a-meal contributions and donation

**Would you like more information about hunger or ways to make a difference? Do you need help developing social justice ministries in your congregation? Have you concerns which you would like help exploring?**

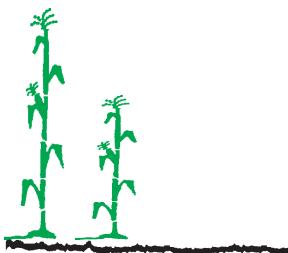
Contact **Bob Erickson, Director**

Phone 614.424.6203; e-mail <[HungerNetOhio@aol.com](mailto:HungerNetOhio@aol.com)>; Website: <[HungerNetOhio.org](http://HungerNetOhio.org)>

Fall 2011

**HUNGER NETWORK IN OHIO**

82 E. 16TH AVE. • COLUMBUS, OHIO 43201



*Creating Awareness  
Seeking Solutions*

