



Society of St. Vincent de Paul ***Archdiocesan Council of Seattle***

2009 Legislative Agenda

(Adopted 2/7/2009)

Mission Statement of Voice of the Poor (VOP), Seattle Archdiocesan Council

Believing in the dignity of every person, Voice of the Poor supports Catholic social teaching. Under the direction of the Seattle Archdiocesan Council, we will advocate for justice on behalf of those in need, while educating St. Vincent de Paul members about economic and social issues impacting the poor.

Purpose of an Archdiocesan Council Legislative Agenda for St. Vincent de Paul:

- Provide a framework for Vincentian advocacy, locally and beyond.
- Focus advocacy on basic needs (housing, health care, income) based on Catholic social teaching, for those we serve.
- Serve as a guide to the Archdiocesan Council VOP Committee when recommending legislation or issues to the Council for consideration.
- The agenda will be reviewed annually by the Archdiocesan Council VOP Committee and after input from the District Councils, submitted to the Council for adoption.

For updates about the Seattle Archdiocesan Council Voice of the Poor, see the website:
www.svdpsea.org/archdiocese

Society Position Statements

To date the National Voice of the Poor Committee has produced nine position papers, approved by the National President and Board. These statements are foundation documents for Vincentian advocacy and are posted on the national Voice of the Poor website: www.voiceofthepoor.org.

1. A Just Wage for Employees of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (April 2001)
2. Affordable Housing for the Poor (Feb. 2002)
3. Health Care for the Poor (Feb. 2004)
4. Position Statement on Immigration (Sept. 2004)
5. Position Statement on Fair Wages (Sept. 2005)
6. Position Statement on Restorative Justice (Sept. 2006)
7. Position Statement on Predatory Lending (Apr. 2007)
8. Position Statement on Homelessness (Aug. 2007)
9. Position Statement on Hunger (Sept. 2008)

Catholic Social Teaching

Vincentians should become familiar with Catholic social teaching as the Church's guide to advocacy and Part Seven of the Society's Rule which addresses the role of Vincentians in civil society. Recommended resources for Conferences are the Society's [Serving in Hope videos and workbooks: Module IV: Our Vincentian Mission and Module V: The Rule](#). [Find related information at the National VOP website: \[www.voiceofthepoor.org\]\(http://www.voiceofthepoor.org\)](#)

Voice of the Poor Priority Areas for Advocacy – 2009

The Seattle Archdiocesan Council VOP Committee will continue to follow legislation and budgeting at the National and State levels and work with local officials in areas affecting those we serve. The Council is on record in support of funding for social and human services for the needy at all levels of government.

The following issues *have been approved* by the Archdiocesan Council for advocacy. The VOP Committee may come to the Council with new issues, if additional support for/VOP core issues becomes necessary.

Housing and Homelessness

Believing that the dignity of the human person is the source of the right to affordable housing, the Council encourages:

- **The preservation and production of quality housing for low-income families, the elderly and other vulnerable persons; as well as the participation and partnership of residents, nonprofit community groups and churches to build and preserve affordable housing.**
- **The exploration of opportunities to speak out in favor of increasing the number of rent subsidy programs, such as expanding Section 8 programs; there is no substitute for involved, effective and committed government.**

The Council supports:

- Increasing permanent housing for low and moderate-income families (i.e., Housing Trust Funds at all levels).
- Raising the number of rent subsidy programs, especially for extremely low-income households.
- Full funding for affordable housing programs such as Section 8 and Section 202; preserve targeting Section 8 vouchers for extremely low-income households.
- Increased funding for homeless assistance programs.
- Providing “housing first” with supportive services for the homeless
- Supporting utility assistance programs
- Granting taxing authority for local governments' 10 Year plans to end homelessness
- Increasing funding for temporary rental assistance for people in need
- Appropriating funding for housing and social services for low-income households

Income and Assistance

Recognizing that a budget reflects a communal response to fundamentally moral questions, the Council recognizes that people have the right to productive work, to fair wages, and to private property and economic initiative. Paying a just wage is a powerful witness to employers, donors, government officials, church leaders and others who are – or should be – concerned with economic justice for all people. The Council supports:

- Preserving social services for poor and vulnerable persons
- Increasing the vendor rates for social service agencies
- Increasing funding for TANF grants, and for daycare and transportation for TANF recipients
- Establishing a 12-month exemption in the TANF program for new mothers
- Increasing funding for GA-U and adding mental health benefits
- Expanding anti-hunger programs
- Restricting and reforming payday loans
- Abolishing predatory loan practices
- Encouraging and promoting the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)
- Establishing a fair/living wage
- Increasing funding for the Low Income Housing Energy Assistance Program

Health Care

Recognizing that access to affordable health care affirms the human dignity of a person, the Council recognizes that people cannot adequately survive if they are sick and suffering. Providing proper health care should work in conjunction with any government poverty reduction program. The Council supports:

- Increasing access to health care coverage for everyone
- Increasing enrollment levels in the Basic Health Plan
- Ensuring health care coverage for every child by 2010
- Increasing funding for mental health services, especially for children
- Preserving Medicaid entitlement and benefits for low-income individuals
- Increasing immunization outreach efforts, especially for children