

**Voice of the Poor Committee Meeting**  
Washington, D.C., Saturday, February 21, 2004

From: Ann Cole

These are my impressions of the meeting – I am sure Deborah will have a more complete report.

The Health Care for the Poor position paper has been approved. I obtained a copy at the meeting – hopefully more will be available for the committee.

Regional reports included these ideas:

- Encourage members to make follow up visits with people served to get more information on why they are in the position of needing emergency assistance so that we can more effectively tell their stories. Variations of this suggestion came from several areas.
- Keep focus on the “poorest of the poor” – not going off on tangents even for good issues.
- Try to partner with Daughters of Charity and other Vincentians. Ladies of Charity may be able to help with advocacy.
- Be partisan to the poor, not to an established party. Hold elected officials accountable for their actions.
- Florida group video – more on this follows.

I presented the written report by Tom for our group.

A Voice of the Poor brochure has been developed that Deborah will scan and put on the VoP website.

The Arizona group put together a position paper on 3 issues important to their people and were ready for their Hill visits on arrival. I hope that the San Mateo contingent can do something similar next year. I suggest that we figure out what state issues are important to us now and meet to develop our comments for legislators prior to Lobby Day (late April).

I was most impressed by a report from the Florida group, from Apopka, a small town (in central Florida, I think). A group of low income homes (shacks) were condemned by the city. Notices giving the residents 48 hours to quit the property were placed on doors. About 20 families were notified to leave, some had been there for many years, most were working poor. SVdP went to the press – they had to accompany a reporter, who was afraid to go into the area. They got publicity. The city and landlord agreed to give families time to move and help to find and get into other situations. The SVdP group made a “video” – more like a “power point” presentation, using digital pictures of the houses and families, interspersed with comments on the screen, and with the music of the “Prayer of St. Francis” in the background. It was then used in a fund raising presentation to a Foundation. I believe it would be fairly easy to do something similar – it was a very powerful statement.