

Seize the Day Initiative Weekly Update October 22, 2009

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Advancing the Hardest Issues: Climate Change

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information technology, and prevention, would also support easier access to treatment.

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Advancing the Hardest Issues: National Security and Human Rights

There's been some good news on the Guantanamo front recently, including growing evidence that the Obama Administration will continue to make closing Guantanamo a priority. The President's very public re-commitment to close Guantanamo at the UN General Assembly was a good sign and Democrats on Capitol Hill have finally begun to push back on Republican amendments on this issue, including defeating a motion in the House to bar bringing detainees to the U.S. The polling on Guantanamo commissioned by our grantee the **Center for International Policy** (CIP) over the August recess has been very helpful with the White House receiving the results through Senator Dick Durbin (Illinois), leading to a meeting between OSPC, key OSI and OSPC grantees CIP (Tom Andrews) and **Human Rights First**, and the senior White House team working on Guantanamo. The polling and focus groups demonstrated that this will be a difficult fight requiring strong Presidential leadership – which has been missing. The off-the-record White House meeting was very positive although we noted our strong disagreement with any use of indefinite detention and military commissions. We were told (and AG Eric Holder also said publicly last week) that they are likely to release the Administration's plan in mid-November. We are now encouraging groups working on closing Guantanamo to be prepared to weigh in forcefully immediately following the announcement of the Obama plan, welcoming it as a positive step (closing Guantanamo, expressing a preference for Article III trials, trying to end the delay and "lawlessness" of the Bush policies, rejection of an indefinite detention statute) while criticizing strongly some elements of the plan, including use of military commissions and the use of indefinite detention for some existing detainees. (Steve Rickard, Exec. Director, OSPC)

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Ensuring Transparency, Equity, and Accountability in the Economic Recovery

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Reinvestment Act. In large part, *Ensuring Equitable Recovery* seeks to clarify what the government data released on October 15 does and does not address. For example, the government data discloses how many jobs have been created by ARRA-funded contracts, but does not include a breakdown of the race or gender of job recipients. To help organizers investigate and report instances where jobs created by ARRA funds are not equitably going to women and people of color, the Advancement Project's guide provides a list of resources and advocacy tips. The guide can be found at www.advancementproject.org. (Raquiba Labrie, Program Director, Equality and Opportunity Fund)

With unemployment rising and other economic indicators showing, at best, a slow recovery, increased attention is being focused on the impact of the stimulus efforts to date. Proper stimulus evaluation has been hampered by unreliable data being provided by states, the primary allocators of ARRA dollars. Last week, state and federal authorities submitted the first tranche of spending data to the Recovery Act Transparency and Accountability Board (RATB), which has begun to be posted on Recovery.gov. Seize the Day grantee the **Coalition for an Accountable Recovery (CAR)** - a coalition led by **Good Jobs First** and long time OSI grantees **OMB Watch** and the **Project on Government Oversight** - immediately called public attention to the deficits in state spending and contract award-related data. While ARRA imposes unprecedented transparency obligations on state expenditures of these funds, the data is flawed in several respects, including contractors providing states with inconsistent job creation information and generally failing to report (or underreporting) how many or which jobs have been created or saved. As a result, government watchdog groups are unable to publicize concrete information about how the money is being spent. CAR members are working closely with the RATB to clean up the first data set and improve the Recovery.gov website while pushing for reforms to assure that the next data arrives in a form that allows for needed oversight. The majority of discretionary funding remains unspent so advocacy can have an impact on spending going forward.

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and enable borrowers to negotiate with their lenders to achieve affordable loan modifications, instead of steamrolling them into costly foreclosures. (Solomon Greene, Senior Program Officer, Neighborhood Stabilization Initiative)

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