



# NASCSP Newsletter

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## *Message from our Chair:* The Community Services Block Grant - Putting America to Work

by Vaughn Clark



On December 10<sup>th</sup>, Representative Keith Ellison (D-MN) introduced the Put America to Work Act of 2009 (H.R. 4268) which appropriates \$40 billion to local governments to create jobs in the public or non-profit sector for public services. Representative Ellison estimates that this investment will create 1 million jobs. “In the midst of the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, we have an opportunity to create good, high paying jobs for millions of Americans,” said Representative Ellison. “Now is the time to act.”

The goal of the legislation is one that we NASCSP members can embrace; we certainly must stimulate the economy by creating jobs to fill the gap for the 12.5 million Americans looking for jobs. At the same time, communities are in need of services and improvements to repair crumbling infrastructure. But resolving the current joblessness crisis is no small undertaking and is extremely complicated. This is no time for trial and error. Whatever jobs strategy comes out of Washington needs to be comprehensive and build off existing service delivery systems and best practices in order to produce outcomes with unprecedented speed.

“Even if the economy were to immediately begin producing 600,000 jobs a month—more than double the pace of the mid-to-late 1990s, when job growth was

strong—it would take roughly two years to dig ourselves out of the hole we’re in,” warns Don Peck, Deputy Managing Editor of *The Atlantic* in the March article, “How a New Jobless Era Will Transform America.” “The economy could add jobs that fast, or even faster—job growth is theoretically limited only by labor supply, and a lot more labor is sitting idle today than usual. But the U.S. hasn’t seen that pace of sustained employment growth in more than 30 years. And given the particulars of this recession, matching idle workers with new jobs—even once economic growth picks up—seems likely to be a particularly slow and challenging process.”

What is missing from the proposed legislation is any realistic means by which local elected officials and states might quickly identify employment opportunities, connect workers to jobs, and implement critical projects. The process of assessing community needs, forming diverse partnerships, collaborating across sectors and implementing new programs is complex and lengthy. It requires seamless integration of a wide range of providers and services in both the public and private sectors. Leading the process requires an in-depth understanding of the community, knowledge of best practices, and experience collaborating across specialties, as well as the wealth of experience necessary to identify the common ground between diverse interests. For the project to

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succeed, social service providers, local elected officials, non-profit businesses, state governments, and community groups would need to evince an as-yet undemonstrated level of interaction. Without a clear plan to provide the necessary mechanisms, the proposed program is unlikely to work as quickly or as fruitfully as is necessary.

The solution? Use an already existing delivery system that has forty-five years of experience and which can ensure the success of this project. That's right, folks! Community Action was born for this role. The Community Services Block Grant (CSBG), administered by the States, can create, coordinate and deliver a broad array of programs and services in communities around the country. Our mission is to create economic sustainability, revitalize low-income communities, and empower low-wage working families to become self-sufficient. The Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) has resources and brings energy savings as well as jobs to communities. This network is uniquely positioned to bring together all the necessary elements of a successful jobs program. The flexibility of the CSBG and the unique expertise of the WAP allow for rapid appropriate responses that will prevent the current economic crises from inflicting long-term scars on communities.

The current Jobs bills being discussed on the Hill call for experience in and knowledge of the communities being served. They require community needs assessments and the identification of critical projects to connect workers to jobs right away. Do we really have time for an ill-defined medley of local elected officials, community groups and labor leaders to get together and start the lengthy process of figuring these things out? Community Action, with its experience and knowledge of the local community has already completed needs assessments which could be applied to this project. In addition, CAAs are federally mandated to coordinate and collaborate with other sectors and service providers. Bringing together the necessary players to make this project successful would be fast and seamless.

In addition, CAAs are already on the ground working with low-income communities so they know the best practice models and proven employment strategies that work in their communities. The national network makes it possible to access and replicate proven strategies from all around the country. Each State's CSBG office has hard data demonstrating which strategies will produce the best results in particular communities. All of this data is on

hand and ready to use to both create jobs and connect workers to them quickly. With an influx of support, already-successful CAA programs will increase job opportunities without delay.

The network of CSBG-funded agencies also comes with its own well-established award-winning outcome reporting system which statistically documents results. Projects are tracked, evaluated, and adjusted while in process using up-to-the minute current data.

CAA's are best-positioned not only to connect workers with jobs quickly, but to help workers in vulnerable populations maintain employment as well. According to a *New York Times* op-ed piece by Bob Herbert entitled, "The Worst of the Pain" (February 8, 2010), the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University in Boston conducted an analysis of labor conditions in different economic groups during the fourth quarter of 2009. What they found was that vulnerable populations are increasingly at risk, "The people suffering the most drastic employment reversals in this recession have been those who were in the lower-income groups to begin with — the young, less well-educated workers, especially black and Hispanic high school dropouts, and certain categories of service workers, such as food preparers and building cleaners. Blue-collar workers were also hammered, especially those in the construction industry."

Individuals with barriers to employment are the hardest for a project such as this to serve. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the number of long-term unemployed (those unemployed for over 26 weeks), continues to climb, and reached 6.3 million in January. These individuals are the most difficult to reach. It takes experience to serve this population. A large number of these workers face barriers to employment and a disproportionate amount are from the lowest income brackets. These individuals need additional services and supports in order to obtain employment and participate fully in the economy. Community Action has always worked with the hardest to serve populations. We understand that it's hard to look for work, let alone find work, let alone keep a job, when your basic needs aren't met. A successful jobs program must recognize and address this challenge. Community Action Agencies provide comprehensive employment support services that help connect all types of workers to jobs and help them maintain their placement. These services include

childcare, education and training, transportation to work, health care services, food and nutrition, and housing.

In addition, CSBG-funded agencies understand the importance of moving people along a career track so that they can earn a living wage and get benefits. If economic predictions are correct, a full recovery to our previous unemployment level of 5% is some years away. This public jobs project is a stop-gap measure to help people who are out of work get temporary jobs. As a viable strategy to contribute to the long-term health of the economy, the project will also need to provide skill-building opportunities and career tools to help workers succeed

over the long-haul. Just providing a job, any job, isn't enough. CSBG-funded agencies provide a more comprehensive long-term strategy to help workers move up the career ladder and become economically self-sufficient.

**CONCLUSION**

It's clear there is going to be a jobs bill. The only question at the time of this writing, is exactly what shape that bill will take. This is the time for us at NASCSP to assert ourselves and tout our expertise and that's exactly what our staff will be doing. Community Action is critical to any successful employment and recovery effort at the national level. We can do this.

**We Need a Jobs Bill**

*by Arley Johnson*

Laws and sausage—two things you really don't want to know too much about the process of making. I'd hoped to bring you great news of a large jobs bill on its way to the President's desk for signature—one with a great public works plan and a social services component specifically designed to help low-wage workers achieve more gainful employment. Of course, this new bill would set up non-profits (like CAAs) to work with states, cities, and the public sector to provide hundreds of thousands of these new jobs in the most vulnerable low-income sections of our nation. But if you've kept even half an ear on the political discourse raging in our country of late, then you know the mood here in Washington is sour indeed. And unfortunately for all of us, a serious lack of bi-partisanship, exaggerated rhetoric on all sides, and an unsafe level of anger just doesn't make for great legislation.

There is actually a good piece of comprehensive job creation legislation now working its way through the House. If passed, it would present an opportunity for the CSBG Network to play an important role on the public works and community service side. Over in the Senate, though, continued dissension and the ongoing need for filibuster-proof 60-vote margins mean that a comprehensive jobs bill is highly unlikely. So now the Senate is trying to pass component parts of a comprehensive job creation plan broken up into a series of individual bills. We'll see tax breaks for small business in one bill, extension of unemployment compensation in another, and so forth. No one really knows how many different bills there might be. But, some early test votes are taking place during the last week of February, and we're

going to follow each piece of legislation and look for every opportunity to add your voice to the debate, so that we'll impact appropriations and policies to best serve the people for whom we advocate.

On a positive note, we fully expect that this legislation will be a high priority. The growing realization of just how desperately we need to reinvigorate our economy will likely win the day. The process sure isn't pretty, but if that's what it takes to get our country back to work, then so be it. Meanwhile, the NASCSP staff is hard at work with our partners to design the best possible role for our network to play in economic recovery. We're carefully scouring data and learning how individual programs across the network have successfully created jobs. I'll have more on this for you in my next communiqué.

**THE WORLD IS WATCHING**

Looking at the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act quarterly 1512 reports, it's clear that the goal of complete and successful ARRA spending and reporting is still a work in progress. Let's keep improving on both parts. We've gotten better information in this second quarter, and we need to build on that success. Have all the state issues that you've identified as impediments to your program's success been properly addressed? Is there anything that NASCSP can do to assist you? Is there someone we can contact on your behalf? I know our staff criss-cross the country providing training opportunities to states and their local agencies. Is this training helpful? How can we improve?

Every day here in Washington, we're scanning and analyzing media references to Weatherization, CSBG, and ARRA spending. We're pushing back on misinformation about and false characterizations of the programs. Has the media contacted you? Would you like some help answering their

questions to the benefit of your program? By all means, give us a call. We want to help you bear the scrutiny that inevitably comes with large federal investments. Many eyes are on us all right now. Again, our mission is to assist you and to ensure our network's success, so don't go it alone.



## LEGISLATIVE CORNER

*edited by Jovita A. Tolbert and Rebecca Stewart*



### PRESIDENT'S 2011 BUDGET

In February, the President released an initial outline of his 2011 budget. The President's FY 2011 budget contains a significant increase for the Weatherization Assistance Program to \$300 million. As with the 2010 allocation, there is \$30 million for the continuation of the Innovations in Weatherization activity.

A relevant part of the Introduction section of the Department of Energy budget request states: "Federal assistance for state-level programs, such as State Energy Program grants (\$75 million, a 50 percent increase from FY 2010) and Weatherization Assistance grants (\$300 million, a 43 percent increase from FY 2010), will help States and individuals take advantage of efficiency measures for buildings and homes, lower energy costs and greenhouse gas emissions, and develop an ever-evolving, technically proficient workforce."

The President's FY 2011 Budget for LIHEAP is complex. It would reduce the total core budget from \$5.1 billion in FY 2010 to \$3.3 billion. Of this amount, \$2.51 billion would be allocated by formula grant and \$790 million would be allocated for emergency funds. In comparison, the FY 10 appropriation provided \$4.5 billion in formula grant funds and \$590.3 million in emergency funds. The FY 2011 Budget would also authorize a new "trigger" provision for LIHEAP that would be similar to the trigger proposed last year but would build in more flexibility. The trigger would adjust funding levels upwards in the event of higher energy prices. The President's Budget set aside \$2 billion for the trigger for FY 2011. As such, assuming all trigger and emergency funds were released, then the Budget would provided a total of \$5.3 billion, an increase of \$200 million over the current year.

The Community Services Block Grant was level funded at \$700 million in the President's budget. Notably, the President's budget maintained or increased a number of

human needs funding streams of importance to the CSBG network. Below is a brief overview.

### BUDGET PROPOSAL EXPANDS QUALITY CHILD CARE AND EARLY EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

- \$1.6 billion increase for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), including \$373 million for quality activities of which \$137 million is targeted for activities that improve the quality of infant/toddler care.
- A Head Start and Early Head Start increase of almost \$1 billion to maintain the ARRA expansion.

### BUDGET PROPOSAL ADDRESSES THE NUTRITION NEEDS OF VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

- \$10 billion over ten years in additional funding for Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization.
- \$397 million for the Summer Food Service Program, an increase of \$10 million.
- \$87.8 million increase for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), bringing the projected total FY 2011 CACFP expenditures to \$2.7 billion.
- \$57.2 billion for SNAP/Food Stamps, an increase of nearly \$7.6 billion over FY 2010.
- \$246.5 million for The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) and an additional \$50 million for transportation and distribution costs.

### TAX PROVISIONS

- The budget would make permanent the recent improvements in the **Earned Income Tax Credit** for families with three or more children.
- The budget would increase credit amounts for moderate income families through the **Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit**.
- The budget would improve and expand the **Saver's Credit** by making it a refundable match while also increasing eligibility levels.

•The budget also proposes to temporarily extend both the **Making Work Pay Tax Credit** and **COBRA Health Insurance Premium Assistance** for laid-off workers.

**POSSIBLE JOBS BILL**

While proposed jobs bills currently do not include language for the WAP, a possible component of a future jobs bill may be the Home Star proposal. Under this scheme, homeowners would receive rebates for energy efficient improvements made to their homes for up to 50% of the cost. There would be two tracks:

•Silver Star (prescriptive): provides a near-term incentive for specific energy saving investments including air sealing; attic, wall, and crawl space insulation; duct sealing or

replacement; and replacement of existing windows and doors, furnaces, air conditioners, heat pumps, water heaters and appliances with high-efficiency models.

•Gold Star (performance): offers an incentive to households that choose to conduct a comprehensive energy audit and then implement a variety of measures that are designed together to provide greater total returns in energy savings.

Another possible component of a jobs bill may be Building Star, which focuses on energy efficiency improvements on commercial and multifamily buildings. A separate initiative would focus on the industrial and manufacturing sector, including funding of process efficiency measures. The president also proposed expanding funding for the manufacturer’s energy efficiency tax credit to \$5 billion.

**CSBG Spotlight:**  
**A Time of Opportunity for a New York State Community Action Agency**  
*by Kimberly A. Krula, Human Resources and Community Operations Manager, Community Action Partnership for Madison County; edited by Natalya Lozovaya*

“What do you do when half the renters in your county can’t afford to rent?” asks Julie Dale, Executive Director of Community Action Partnership (CAP) for Madison County in New York State (NYS).

Dale’s question is in response to the National Low Income Housing Coalition’s Out of Reach study, which states that 48% of renters in Madison County cannot afford a two bedroom apartment at fair market value. With fair market value at \$713/month, someone making minimum wage would have to work 100 hours per week just to pay housing costs alone.

Lack of affordable housing puts a huge strain on Madison Business Development, the county’s Section 8 housing provider, which has a waiting list of 250 families. And with no homeless shelters in the county, residents have very few options when the budget crunch begins.

“It’s time to make fair market value fair,” says Dale.

In partnership with Madison Business Development and the local Department of Social Services, the agency has launched a 22-month program funded through the NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing (HPRP) Program.

The HPRP program is designed to provide assistance to

individuals and families while they are on the waiting list for Section 8 housing and, hopefully, eliminate the waiting list completely. Assistance will include rental and utility assistance, case management, financial literacy instruction, and employment counseling until households have moved to the top of the list and can receive a Section 8 housing voucher or, ideally, no longer need any housing assistance.

“Housing stability is such a vital part of a family’s life—I think this is one of the most important things we can be doing for the county right now.” says Dale.

When Dale came to the agency in August 2008, CAP had been serving the homeless and at-risk population for over 20 years. The agency has earned a reputation as a comprehensive service provider, serving families through its Housing, Early Childhood, and Family & Youth Divisions. CAP is the chief referral source in Madison County, with connections to over 50 health and human service agencies and faith based organizations and a tremendous “word of mouth” reputation with community members and participants.

Under Dale’s leadership, the agency has also begun a new employment services program with in-depth assistance designed to complement, rather than compete with, the services offered at other local employment service agencies—an achievement Dale credits to her staff.

Even with two new programs designed to meet the immediate needs of county residents, Dale and her staff haven't forgotten the long-term needs of the future.

Last year, the agency launched "Be the Change," its first ever major fundraising campaign. Inspired by the words of human rights leader Mahatma Gandhi, "Be the change you wish to see in the world," the campaign aims to raise \$150,000 in support of the agency's mission by December 2010. The funds will help ensure that no sudden loss of funding will mean a loss of important services to Madison County residents.

The agency has raised over \$63,000 toward its goal and is looking forward to hosting its next major fundraising event

this March, when Board and staff volunteers will host an Academy Awards mixer the Friday before the awards broadcast, complete with hors d'oeuvres, trivia, raffles, and movie clips from nominated films.

"This is a time of opportunity," says Dale.

"We're looking forward to superior service during a time of turmoil, agency and community growth during a time of change, and as always, living up to our mission of 'helping people, changing lives.'"

*For more information about New York State's Community Action Partnership for Madison County, visit their website at [www.capmadco.org](http://www.capmadco.org).*

## WAP Corner: National WAP Evaluation

*by Robert Scott*

With all the major issues confronting the WAP network in trying to reach full production capacity with American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding, Weatherization Program Notice IO-II, announcing the National Evaluation of the Weatherization Assistance Program, may not have received the full attention and consideration it should have. Perhaps with all the attention on the WAP changes and ramping up issues, State and local WAP Managers took the notice about the Evaluation more as a FYI of something that DOE would conduct and that it would not require much involvement from WAP operators.

I have the privilege of being a member of the National Evaluation Network Committee, which met on January 26-27, 2010 in Crystal City, VA. I also served in a similar capacity in the Spring of 2005, when a first National Weatherization Network Committee convened in Washington, DC to provide guidance about what to include in an evaluation. At that time, the goal was to focus the evaluation on Program Year 2006, but was delayed. With the change in Administration, the go-ahead for the evaluation was given in Spring of 2009.

I remember being very impressed with the scope of the evaluation as it was developed in 2005. The present plan is even more ambitious. There will actually be two evaluations. The first evaluation, which is called a retrospective evaluation, will focus on WAP Program Years 2007 and 2008. A second evaluation will focus on WAP during the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act period. The retrospective evaluation is intended to provide a baseline

with respect to impacts, non-energy benefits, cost effectiveness, training, and program operation. Since the last full national WAP evaluation was nearly two decades ago, the results will be very valuable to the WAP network. In addition, this baseline will be used to compare results from the WAP ARRA period evaluation, and may provide answers to questions like what the impact on savings and cost-effectiveness of the increased maximum cost average to \$6500 is, and whether there was any effect on overall quality due to the fast ramp up and large number of new field workers.

The evaluation will have several components. First there will be an **impact** analysis to estimate national energy savings, program cost effectiveness, and non-energy benefits attributable to the program. Then, a comprehensive **process** evaluation will examine program operations and implementation, with a particular focus on procedures used for audits, client education, staff training, and quality assurance. There will also be **special technical projects** analysis which will focus on the performance of air sealing, duct sealing, furnace system tune-ups, and furnace system replacements, as well as the performance of refrigerator replacement activities and the potential savings from air conditioning. Lastly, two **special surveys** will be conducted of occupants and weatherization staff to assess energy knowledge, non-energy benefits, occupant health, and client satisfaction.

The scope of the undertaking will be very large. A projected 400 local agencies – nearly half of the country's

subgrantees – will comprise the sample to provide information on about one-third of their weatherized homes. All States will also be involved. The survey tools are very extensive. This will require a significant amount of focused effort to comply. The network needs to start planning how they can allocate the necessary resources, particularly the personnel time that will be needed, to complete the various surveys and required information. It is likely that staff will need to be assigned and maybe even new staff hired for this purpose. All resources pertaining to the evaluation should be allowed as a T&TA expense. The WAP network should be hearing a lot more about the evaluation in the near future.

With the many issues facing the WAP network in reaching full capacity to meet ARRA goals, the evaluation may seem

poorly timed. While the timing may not be opportune for program operators, NASCS SP fully supports the evaluation. It is not just long overdue, but is sorely needed to analyze today's Weatherization Assistance Program. The Program has undergone many technical advances in diagnostics, measures performed, and installations since the last evaluation. It is time to evaluate the results.

The evaluation results can be used to demonstrate the value of WAP to policymakers, stakeholders, and the general public. If there are any shortcomings, then those issues can be analyzed so improvements can be made. The WAP network and community needs to know exactly how we are performing and the whole impact of our collective efforts.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### **ACI New Jersey Home Performance Conference & Awards Banquet**

March 4-5, 2010

Trump Plaza Hotel

Atlantic City, NJ

[www.affordablecomfort.org](http://www.affordablecomfort.org)

### **Northeast Sustainable Energy Association**

March 9-11, 2010

Seaport World Trade Center

Boston, MA

[www.nesca.org](http://www.nesca.org)

### **ACI Home Performance 2010**

April 19-23, 2010

Renaissance Austin Hotel

Austin, TX

[www.affordablecomfort.org](http://www.affordablecomfort.org)

### **I04th GFOA Annual Conference**

June 6-9, 2010

Atlanta, GA

Georgia World Congress Center

[www.gfoa.org](http://www.gfoa.org)

### **2010 National Energy Assistance Directors' Association Meeting**

June 13-14, 2010

Hyatt Regency San Antonio

San Antonio, TX

[www.neuac.org](http://www.neuac.org)

### **CAPLAW National Training Conference**

June 16-18, 2010

Savannah Marriott Riverfront

Savannah, GA

[www.caplaw.org](http://www.caplaw.org)

### **NCSL Legislative Summit**

July 25-29, 2010

Kentucky International Convention Center

Louisville, KY

303.364.7700

### **2010 NASCS SP Annual Conference**

September 21-24, 2010

Charleston Marriott

Charleston, SC

[nascsp@gove.org](mailto:nascsp@gove.org)

### **The Congressional Black Caucus Foundation's 40th Annual Legislative Conference**

September 22-25, 2010

Walter E. Washington Convention Center

Washington, DC

[www.cbcfinc.org](http://www.cbcfinc.org)

### **2011 NASCS SP Mid-Winter Training Conference**

Orientation—February 28-March 1, 2011

Conference— March 2-4, 2011

Hyatt Regency Bethesda

Bethesda, MD

[nascsp@gove.org](mailto:nascsp@gove.org)

## 2010 ANNUAL CONFERENCE



IT'S TIME TO MAKE YOUR PLANS  
 CHARLESTON MARRIOTT  
 SEPTEMBER 21-24, 2010  
 PLAN TO BE THERE!!!!

### NASCSP STAFF

Timothy R. Warfield  
 Executive Director  
[warfield@nascsp.org](mailto:warfield@nascsp.org)

Tabitha Beck  
 Data Analyst  
[tbeck@nascsp.org](mailto:tbeck@nascsp.org)

Jenae Bjelland  
 Director, Research  
[bjelland@nascsp.org](mailto:bjelland@nascsp.org)

Jeannie Chaffin  
 CSBG Senior Program and Policy  
 Specialist  
[jchaffin@nascsp.org](mailto:jchaffin@nascsp.org)

Joan Harris  
 Director, Special Projects  
[jharris@nascsp.org](mailto:jharris@nascsp.org)

Arley Johnson  
 Director, Government Relations  
[ajohnson@nascsp.org](mailto:ajohnson@nascsp.org)

Terry Joyner  
 Director, Member Services  
[tjoyner@nascsp.org](mailto:tjoyner@nascsp.org)

Gretchen Knowlton  
 Special Assistant to the Executive  
 Director  
[gknowlton@nascsp.org](mailto:gknowlton@nascsp.org)

Natalya Lozovaya  
 Research Assistant, CSBG  
[nlozovaya@nascsp.org](mailto:nlozovaya@nascsp.org)

Robert Scott  
 Director, Weatherization Services  
[rscott@nascsp.org](mailto:rscott@nascsp.org)

Rebecca Stewart  
 Program Assistant, Weatherization  
 Services  
[rstewart@nascsp.org](mailto:rstewart@nascsp.org)

Mark Schmeissing  
 Research Assistant, CSBG  
[mschmeissing@nascsp.org](mailto:mschmeissing@nascsp.org)

Jovita Tolbert  
 Director, Program Services  
[jtoltbert@nascsp.org](mailto:jtoltbert@nascsp.org)

Jerry Doremus  
 Web Coordinator  
[jdoremus@nascsp.org](mailto:jdoremus@nascsp.org)



### NASCSP Mission:

*"Building capacity in states to respond to poverty issues."*