

Annual Report 2007-08



It's an image that's central to America's idea of itself: A group of ordinary people getting together to voice their concerns about public policy and their vision of the common good. It's a treasured asset in our national memory, like barn-raising and village greens, and yet – outside the carefully staged “town halls” during election season – real-life examples can be hard to come by. ACPP is out to change that. In community listening sessions and issue workshops across the state, our members are taking seriously the promise preserved in the word *democracy* – “people power.”

A broader reach

New connections

ACPP receives many offers throughout the year to collaborate with other groups near and far on vital issues. Our members' seven issue priorities are a good start at screening the requests and keeping us focused. But more and more, weighing opportunities to connect on our own agenda items is becoming a significant part of our job. Will the proposed partnership advance our stated goals or divide our attention? Will it help us work more efficiently or bog us down?

We try to remind ourselves that these invitations are a hopeful sign of growing awareness and hunger for change. A number of partnerships this year extended ACPP's research and advocacy on the state and national levels.

With the help of ACPP's policy team leader, a new alliance came together this year to consider strategies for addressing Alabama's chronic shortage of affordable housing. The Low Income Housing Coalition of Alabama has drafted a long-range plan that includes establishment of a state housing trust fund.

Our entry into the Pushback Network brought us new training and tools for voter engagement. The two-year-old coalition of state-based organizing groups fosters strategies for bringing under-represented constituencies – people of color, low-wealth communities and young people – into the electoral process.

Tireless outreach and legwork by our south Alabama organizer and ACPP member groups helped ongoing local recovery efforts in the Katrina-affected states coalesce into a Gulf Coast regional network. By attending U.S. Senate committee hearings,

Who are we?

Arise Citizens' Policy Project (ACPP) is a statewide citizens' organization comprising 153 faith-based and community groups. ACPP analyzes state policies and educates its members on poverty issues. ACPP has 501(c)(3) status, so contributions are tax-deductible.

petitioning state officials, and conducting tours of areas still damaged two years after the storm, these advocates stayed the course even as congressional support for more funding faltered.

In January, our policy team released a major study on the impact of Alabama's economic development policies on low-income workers. *Bridging the Gap*, produced in cooperation with the national Working Poor Families Project, outlined 30 achievable recommendations modeled on best practices of nearby states. The report won strong editorial endorsements statewide. A *Tuscaloosa News* commentary included the following:

Progress moves at a snail's pace in Alabama. We're glad that doesn't discourage the efforts of [ACPP] and other advocates of long-needed changes.

Seeking consensus

This spring, we partnered with Alabama Appleseed on a three-year project aimed at building an Alabama consensus for health care reform. The initiative, funded by a generous grant from the Public Welfare Foundation, will proceed in three phases. The "gathering" phase of research and community listening will culminate in a statewide health care access conference at Birmingham-Southern College on Feb. 10, 2009. The "equipping" phase focuses on development and distribution of *The Alabama Health Care Handbook*. And the "motivating"



phase will comprise a campaign for specific reform measures in 2010-11.

The key to coordinating such wide-ranging projects, we're learning, is following the thread that runs among them – removing Alabama's long-standing barriers to the common good. ACPP executive director Kimble Forrister summed it up when the House Poverty Task Force, of which he was a member, issued its report in February: "Any honest appraisal of poverty in Alabama will point to the same obstacles."

A letter from Kimble



Dear ACPP Supporter,

We will remember 2008 as the year we came within one vote. Our tax reform plan needed 21 votes to pass the Alabama Senate; we mustered 20. We worked our networks and our members in key districts. We tested new Internet-based organizing tools. The plan won the support of most legislators, but it couldn't overcome the infighting that locked the Senate down for most of the session.

"Why tax groceries?" That headline on our petition drew the attention of thousands of Alabamians who support tax fairness. Our dream is to build these names into a voter database that someday can provide the margin of success for a statewide ballot. Thanks to funding from the Pushback Network, we used the petition to try our hand at electoral organizing.

We also embarked on a major partnership with the Public Welfare Foundation. Like program officers at a few other foundations, Terri Langston understands how organizing, policy analysis and advocacy can work together to change unfair policies. She was willing to commit \$200,000 a year for three years to help us address tax fairness and to build support for expanding health coverage.

We know the ingredients for success. Blend organizing, analysis and advocacy. Undergird with strong financial support from individuals, member groups and foundations. Add deeper partnerships with health care advocates and providers. Bind it all together with leadership. By definition, a leader knows where we're going and points the way. If that's true, then shared leadership can align the energy and voices of a broader community for change.

We know where we're going: We're convinced that Alabama will not forever be one of two states that tax groceries, nor the state with the highest income tax at the poverty line, nor the state with the most limited health coverage. Changes are coming, and we want to point the way.

Yours in hope,

Kimble Forrister
Executive Director

ACPP's organizing work

Arise Citizens' Policy Project believes low-income people deserve a voice in the development of policies that affect their lives. ACPP organizers work to identify unfair state policies and change the attitudes from which those policies grow.

We strengthen our coalition by deepening the involvement of our member groups. Through educational workshops and other meetings, we facilitate discussions about poverty issues and public policy alternatives. This year, ACPP organizers held 119 meetings around the state, including 26 listening sessions and 18 workshops.

We continue to learn new ways to help citizens' voices be heard. This year we took advantage of the growing use of technology as a venue for advocacy. We designated an organizer as our e-advocacy coordinator. We began using an e-mail program that makes it easier for citizens to contact their elected officials. Our members succeeded in communicating 409 times with legislators through our e-advocacy work alone

during the 2008 legislative session. Of course, technology doesn't replace the relationship-building that organizers specialize in, but it enhances that work and brings more people into the democratic process.



ACPP's policy analysis

Because our policy team is supported by foundation grants, they cannot use those funds to urge voters to support or oppose policy proposals. They do, however, develop objective analysis of proposed and adopted legislation. The policy team produced 11 fact sheets and issue briefs this year and released five studies. They produced *The State of Working Alabama 2007* report and *Bridging the Gap: Alabama's Working Families and the Broken Promise of Economic Opportunity*, as well as our member newsletters.

We appreciate our contributors —

Friends of ACPP support our work in many ways — by attending meetings, sharing information and writing to editors, as well as making financial contributions. We appreciate them all!

A special thanks goes to those who are making monthly contributions through electronic fund transfers. This regular, dependable source of revenue is a big help in the budgeting process.

The following made tax-deductible contributions to Arise Citizens' Policy Project between July 1, 2007, and June 30, 2008:

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Thank you for your 2007-08 support!

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Thank you!

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Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
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Economic Policy Institute
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Ford Foundation
The Gratitude Foundation
Marguerite Casey Foundation
Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation
Public Welfare Foundation
Pushback Network
Tuskegee University
United Cerebral Palsy of Greater Birmingham
Working Poor Families Project

A note from Brenda

In reviewing the financial report for 2007-08, I am heartened to see that ACP's income grew over last year's by \$112,766 – almost 20 percent! We're grateful to the organizations listed above for their commitment to improving the lives of low-income Alabamians. Without these generous investments, ACP simply could not carry on the important work of raising awareness about unfair policies and building consensus for change.

Equally vital are the contributions of individuals and member groups. Many of these gifts come \$15, \$25, or \$50 at a time, but they add up to a body of evidence that people want a fair tax structure, they believe everyone should have access to health care, and they support public investment in the common good. Our members are indispensable to the spirit and energy of Arise, offering encouragement when the way gets weary and rallying behind even the smallest opportunity for success. We thank you and welcome your continued support!

Brenda Boman
Development Director



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ACPP financial report

Fiscal Year ended 6/30/08

<u>INCOME</u>	
Dues of member groups	\$1,087
Individuals' contributions	81,476
Foundation grants	592,560
Honoraria	100
Interest	9,665
Other income	220
Total income	\$685,108
<u>EXPENDITURES</u>	
Personnel	\$412,923
Office expenses	85,737
Travel	30,901
Contract expenses	117,471
Total expenses	\$647,032

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