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Calendar notes

LISTENING SESSIONS

Mobile 6 pm, Th., Aug. 9, Bay Area Women Coalition, 1700 Jessie St.

Tuscaloosa 5:30 pm, Mon., Aug. 13, location TBA.

Montgomery 6 pm Mon., Aug. 13, Unitarian-Universalist Fellowship.

Coden 6 pm, Tu., Aug. 14, South Bay Communities Alliance, 7385 Hwy. 188.

Birmingham 6:30 pm, Tu., Aug. 14, Birmingham Friends Meeting (on Southside).

Auburn Noon, Th., Aug. 16, UU Busch Center.

Mobile 6:30 pm, Mon., Aug. 27, Providence Hospital, DePaul Rm., 6801 Airport Blvd.

ANNUAL MEETING

Montgomery 9:30 am – 3 pm,
Sat., Sept. 15. Location TBA.

Execution highlights need for reform

Lisa Thomas's walk from Selma, a rally on the Capitol steps, urgent appeals from the national Innocence Project and editorial pages statewide – each act of protest offered a ray of hope. In the end, Governor Riley declined to stay Darrell Grayson's July 26th execution and allow testing of DNA evidence that might have cast

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Report

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2nd anniversary nears

House panel hears Katrina woes

As the 2-year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina approaches, Alabama victims and their advocates are pressing local, state and federal authorities to speed up recovery assistance to low-income and minority residents of unincorporated communities, who have been largely left out. Of particular concern are delays and shortfalls in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) disbursement and the health threat posed by high levels of formaldehyde in FEMA trailers. At a hearing on July 19th, the Oversight and Government Reform Committee of the U.S. House reviewed written testimony on the health issue by Arise organizer Zack Carter and Coden community leader Paul Nelson.

“There are about 400 [Alabama] families – some 2,000 people, including

children, elderly and the disabled ... still stuck in FEMA campers with no prospect of federal relief,” Carter wrote. “The current unreleased CDBG funds will serve less than 10 percent of some 1,200 family applicants.”

Arise joined the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law and several other organizations last month in protesting inequities in Alabama's relief efforts. Mobile County officials later added their signatures to a letter from Arise and other grassroots groups to Sen. Richard Shelby calling for new appropriations to Alabama under the pending Gulf Coast Recovery Act of 2007. The groups are also urging the state to conduct a comprehensive unmet needs assessment to help displaced residents compete for limited funds and advocate for new sources of assistance.

Ala. child well-being lags despite progress

The strong gains that Alabama showed in child health and welfare during the 1990s have begun to erode in the current decade, according to *The 2007 Kids Count Data Book*, released this week by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and VOICES for Alabama's Children. The study shows a drop from 43rd to 48th in Alabama's national ranking for child well-being in 2004-05, the most recent period for which data were available.

Improvements in infant mortality, teen birth rate, high-school drop-out rates and the percentage of teens not in school or working failed to offset declines in six other measures: low birthweight,

child and teen death rates, parent unemployment, single-parent families and children in poverty. The last indicator – showing a 19 percent jump – provides a disturbing backdrop for the other factors and a sharp contrast with Alabama's economic boom.

“We have the advantages of incoming industry and a flourishing economy that many of our neighboring states don't have,” said VOICES executive director Linda Tilly. “We must choose to invest in our children today, so they will be the ones who fuel our economy tomorrow.”

The full report appears at www.alavoices.org.

A few words from Kimble –

Should health care move to center stage on Arise's agenda? I suspect it will happen before long – grabbing the spotlight as the primary focus of tax reform. A decade ago, as we were approaching welfare reform, low-income people in our listening sessions ranked health care fourth on a list of barriers to work, following jobs, child care and transportation. Today, both low- and middle-income people realize how a health emergency can ruin a family's finances – and how lack of money can put their health at risk.

ALLKids has changed the landscape in Alabama health policy. Not only have thousands of children become the first generation in their families to have regular dental care, but the program has worked with Medicaid to help Alabama achieve almost universal coverage in some age groups. It's an amazing public policy success. For adults, it's another story. If a couple with two children makes over \$194 a month, they make too much to qualify for Medicaid. What happens when kids are covered, but not their parents?

Medicaid funding may be the state's most intractable budget problem. As health care costs rise, the tax sources for Medicaid remain stagnant. We can't afford *not* to address the issue. Medicaid is woven deeply into the state's health care infrastructure. Our message has been the same for years: Alabama must find new funding for Medicaid. Yes, that means tax increases. Sadly, we probably won't win those increases unless we earmark the revenue. It's bad policy, but it's a political reality.

This calls for a long-haul campaign. The public – and business leaders – have to understand the issue. We must work strategically with health care providers and our sister advocacy groups to build the case step by step. I hope we'll win new funding by 2010; if we don't, we can make it a major issue in that year's campaigns for governor and for legislative seats. In the meantime, do your homework and read our online fact sheet on Medicaid!

Yours in peace and hope,

We appreciate your support!

ACPP thanks the following individuals and organizations for their generous gifts received between May 27 and July 22, 2007. We'd like to remind our members that, although it is summertime, the living is not easy for many Alabama families. Your tax-deductible contribution to ACPP supports research and education on fairer state policies that will improve the lives of low-income Alabamians. Please use the enclosed envelope to donate today.

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Jeannette R. Bell, Birmingham
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Laura Binger, Huntsville
Dr. Velma Blackwell, Tuskegee Institute
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James Woodson, Tuscaloosa
Ruth Wright, Birmingham
ADEM Reform Coalition

*In honor of the wedding anniversary of her parents,
George and Betty Likis:*
Kathryn Coltrane, Birmingham

*In memory of James Carnes, father of ACPP
communications director Jim Carnes:*
Melissa Oliver, Dadeville

Death penalty reform

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doubt on his guilt. This failure to pursue even a shred of doubt darkens the cloud over Alabama's capital punishment system. As other scheduled executions approach and death penalty reforms come before the Legislature again next year, we urge our leaders to make Darrell Grayson the last person to die under that cloud.