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## A few words from Kimble —

Sometimes it's nice to see ourselves from another perspective. As the annual meeting was winding down, special guest Dara Antrum whispered, "I didn't know Arise had so much going on!" It's true. There was so much energy in the room, much of it wound tightly in competition among the policy proposals. It's both funny and scary to see y'all use your organizing skills on each other in hopes your issue will make the cut.

I've also been impressed at the organic growth we're seeing from your efforts as people "like" our Facebook page (932 now "like" us, a list that grows by 10 a week) and collect names of people who want to untax groceries. We'll collect hundreds more names at the polls in November. You can help: All it takes is a pen, a clipboard, a sign-up sheet and a simple "Want to sign up to untax groceries?" When we send "Untax Tuesdays" e-alerts next spring, we'll have a rich new set of voices to add to our advocacy chorus.

We're already missing policy team leader Ron Gilbert, who has taken the helm at the Community Action Association of Alabama. We're keeping him on contract to do the Daily News Digest since no one else wants to get up that early. If you'd like to see links to key news articles by 7 a.m., sign up at [arisecitizens.org](http://arisecitizens.org).

Yours in hope,

# Report

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## Public transit returns

# Equal pay tops priorities for 2011

By Jim Carnes, communications director

Arise members have targeted the wage gap between the sexes and between White and minority workers as their top legislative priority for the coming session. The call for a permanent Equal Pay Commission leads a line-up of five issues adopted at this year's annual meeting on Sept. 18. The lively gathering at Montgomery's historic St. John's A.M.E. Church drew some 80 member group representatives and individual voting members. In addition to equal pay, the 2011 goals include constitutional reform, public transportation, worker savings incentives, and a moratorium on the death penalty. Two issues — tax reform and adequate state budgets for health care, child care and other human services — are permanent priorities.

Along with the issue presentations by proposing members and Arise staff, Dara Antrum of Community Catalyst offered a national advocate's perspective on health care reform. She cautioned that, as difficult as the process has been thus far, the most important state-level work lies ahead. Arise and its allies will play a crucial role, Dara said, in bringing the consumer voice to tasks such as designing a state Health Insurance Exchange, safeguarding Alabama's exemplary children's coverage, expanding Medicaid and making the case for these items in the state budget.

Arise has worked with Dara and her Community Catalyst colleagues over the last two years as part of the Southern Health Partners collaboration to build regional support for health care reform.



Dara Antrum (left) of St. Louis shares a laugh with Nanyamka Shukura of the Southern Poverty Law Center. Dara is the southern field coordinator for Community Catalyst, a Boston-based national health care consumer advocacy organization.

"I knew Arise had a lot going on," she said, "but I had no idea what a vibrant, engaged and broad-based organization you are until I came to your annual meeting. This has been a real eye-opener. Your members are the greatest!"

Our annual meeting kicks off the fall season of preparation for the legislative year ahead. Arise legislative coordinator Melissa Oliver urged members to vote for the candidates of their choice in the Nov. 2 election but only as the first step in the four-year cycle of state government, which starts anew this year. The next step is meeting the new office-holders and letting them know about Arise's priorities. Then comes "Lobbying with Melissa" after the Legislature convenes on March 1.

"Arise doesn't entertain lawmakers or contribute to their campaigns," Melissa said. "We talk to them and help them understand how their decisions affect the lives of struggling Alabama families."

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# ***We're grateful for your support!***

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*Arise members are the lifeblood of the organization. Arise Citizens' Policy Project thanks the following members for their gifts received between July 28 and October 6, 2010:*

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## ***Election Day 2010***

### **Put democracy in action**

**Don't forget to vote November 2.** But before you cast your ballot, be prepared. Visit [www.alabamavotes.gov](http://www.alabamavotes.gov) to see a sample ballot for your county.

Also on Nov. 2, as Alabamians head to the polls, we'll be collecting signatures of voters who support untaxing groceries. We need your help. The more supporters we can identify across the state on Nov. 2, the louder our collective voice will be in Montgomery next spring.

**Do you have an hour to help?** Please email [rebecca@alarise.org](mailto:rebecca@alarise.org) for more details.