Washington State Catholic Conference

ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Briefing Paper
Catholic Advocacy Day 2009

Welfare policy should reduce poverty and dependency, strengthen family life, and help families leave poverty through work, training, and assistance with child care, health care, housing, and transportation. It should also provide a safety net for those who cannot work.

Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, USCCB 2007

GAU: General Assistance Unemployable (GAU) is truly a safety net for some of the most needy residents of our state. It assists disabled and elderly Washington residents in meeting their basic needs for shelter, food and medical care. GAU is a state funded program that currently provides $339 monthly cash grants and medical care to about 14,000 very low-income people who are physically or mentally incapacitated and unemployable for 90 days. 25% of these people at any one time are homeless.

To qualify for GAU, individuals must be 18 years old and meet income, citizenship and residency requirements. Persons incapacitated solely by alcoholism or drug addiction are not eligible for GAU.

The Governor proposes saving the state $157 million dollars in her biennial budget by entirely eliminating the GAU program.

ACTION: **Please ask your Representatives and your Senator to retain funding for GAU at current levels in order to provide a safety net for individuals who have no other means of support.** Legislators can obtain more information and stories about GAU recipients at the website: http://savegau.com/

Volunteer Chore Services (VCS): Volunteer Chore Services is committed to helping elders and adults with disabilities remain independent in their own homes through a network of volunteers that assist with basic tasks such as light housekeeping, laundry and shopping assistance. Catholic Community Services of Western Washington administers the chore services program in coordination with Catholic Charity agencies throughout the state. VCS collaborates with faith-based congregations, civic groups, schools and community businesses to provide services. The services are provided at no charge and serve as a safety net for those individuals who cannot afford to pay for assistance and do not qualify for state funded chore assistance.

In 2008, with the help of 8,252 volunteers, VCS provided 275,422 hours of service to 5,050 clients in Western Washington alone. The Volunteer Chore program is currently funded at $6 million per biennium and will need to be specifically included in the state biennial budget.

ACTION: **Please ask your Representatives and your Senator to maintain funding for the Volunteer Chore Program to help maintain seniors and people with disabilities in their own homes.**

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