

State Issues We're Tackling:

- Voter Materials Available from OhioVOTES (cover)
- Ballot Issues and Voting Choices (page 2)
- Thumbs up on Issue 2; Lift the CAP on the HTF (page 3)
- Face the Minimum Wage Facts (page 5)
- TANF Funds near \$1 Billion (page 6)
- Proposed Settlement Could Benefit Disabled (page 6)

YEP Advocacy:

- Youth Explore Lack of Access to Resources (page 4)
- Youth Speak at CCH Conference (page 4)

Upcoming Events:

- Conference on Foreclosure Crisis, Implementation of SB 185 and more (page 7)



The Monthly Newsletter of COHHIO, the
Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio

Election Day: Tuesday, November 7th



Is it a good job? A good school? Medicine? Good housing?

Benefits? COHHIO is asking what **YOU** need this election season with a poster that features real Ohioans with real needs. "We're hoping people who visit nonprofits around the state will identify with the poster," says COHHIO advocacy director, Cathy Johnston. "These needs are common to us or to people we know and care about. To cast real people and real needs in the context of voting we think will be effective." The poster concept was a collective effort that grew from various interactions with consumers at nonprofits in Columbus.

In addition to the posters above and below, OhioVOTES, a project of COHHIO, is making available to nonprofits a variety of materials (call 1-888-886-8364 to order).

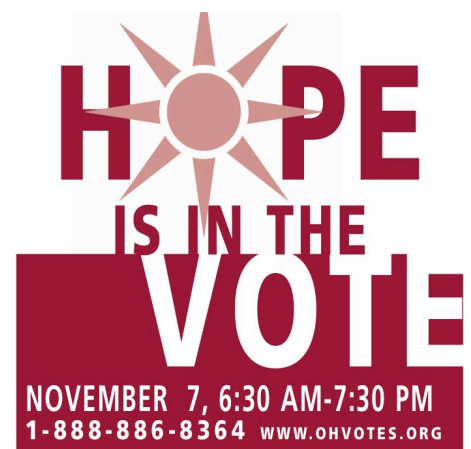
**Remember to bring
your ID on Election Day!**

If you have any problems at the
polls, call **1-866-OUR-VOTE**
(1-866-687-8683)

Items available include:

"I will Vote November 7" buttons
Vote November 7 balloons
Flyer on Voting Rights for Ex-Felons
Flyer on Voting Rights for People with Disabilities
Voter Information and ID requirements on a wallet size card
T-shirts with November 7 on the front and OhioVOTES logo on the back (limited quantity)

For more on the election, issues and OhioVOTES, see page 2



VOTE FOR GOOD SCHOOLS
VOTE FOR WELL-PAYING JOBS
VOTE FOR HEALTHCARE
VOTE FOR BETTER HOUSING





Jocelyn L. Travis
Director
jocelyntravis@cohhio.org

Hotline Help

OhioVotes launched a toll free **HOTLINE** for non-profit agencies and the communities and people they serve to answer questions about voting. If you have questions about voting, voter registration, or need materials about voting for your agency, call **1-888-8VOTE OH (1-888-886-8364)**. This line is answered by a staff member.

Voting Variations – 4 Different Ways to Vote

1) Go to your local polling location on November 7 from 6:30 am to 7:30 pm.

2) Vote by Mail. This is the same as voting absentee. You can now vote absentee without a reason. This is an easy two-step process.

Step One: Fill out an absentee ballot application and return to your local Board of Elections in an envelope with correct postage. Get your application AND the address of your Board of Elections on our website (www.ohvotes.org).

Step Two: Fill out the absentee ballot when you receive it and return it to the Board of Elections. The Board of Elections must receive this ballot by November 7.

3) Register and Vote at the Same Time at your county Board of Elections (usually located downtown) from October 3-10. The only ID required to register and vote at the same time is your driver's license number or the last four digits of your social security number.

4) Vote at the County Board of Elections until November 4 County Board of Elections will have machines available from Oct 3 to November 4 in which to vote. Check with you local Board of Elections (on our website, www.ohvotes.org) Some will have extended hours.

What is a Provisional Ballot?

It's best described as a temporary vote until the Board of Elections verifies your identity and changes your provisional vote to a regular vote.

The most common reasons requiring a provisional ballot include: no ID, improper or expired ID, or not voting

in the right precinct. CALL 1-866 – OUR VOTE immediately if you feel you're being wrongly required to vote a provisional ballot. If you do vote by provisional ballot, you must sign an affirmation form provided by the poll worker. You may be asked to bring ID to the Board of Elections within 10 days.

Ballot Issues: November 7, 2006

Issue 1: Workers' Comp Reform Referendum: This proposal would implement parts of SB 7 and would involve administrative changes and injured workers' benefits. Whether or not this will be on the ballot is pending in court.

Issue 2: Ohio Fair Minimum Wage Amendment: This proposal would raise the state minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$6.85 per hour.

Issue 3: To adopt Section 12 of Article XV of the Constitution of the State of Ohio: This proposed amendment would permit up to 3,500 slot machines at each of seven racetracks and at two non-racing sites in downtown Cleveland.

Issue 4: Smoke Less Ohio: This proposed amendment would allow smoking in select enclosed public areas.

Issue 5: Smoke Free Workplace Act: This statute would prohibit smoking in enclosed areas of public places and enclosed areas in places of employment.

For more information on ballot issues see the League of Women Voters of Ohio at: <http://www.lwvohio.org/>

Notes of Faith

from COHHIO's Executive Director

The Ohio General Assembly's recent attempt at muting the minimum wage debate did little to assist Ohio's 700,000 most affected workers. The whopping \$.30/hour increase earlier this year to \$5.15/hr, the same as the federal rate, helps very few Ohio workers and does not begin to ease the burden of the single parent paying for day care, high school athletics or doctor's visits, let alone the cost of housing.

In reviewing data for this column (the bulk of which may be found on page 5), I was disturbed by the growing disparity between the pay of corporate executives in Ohio and the pay of average employees of those firms. The average increase in earnings for Ohio executives is 17 times more than that of ordinary workers. Hard working Ohioans who contribute to Ohio's corporate profits and our economy should be able to expect more than \$41 for an honest day's work.

Low wages are keeping hard working Ohioans from getting ahead and having the opportunity for a decent, affordable place to call home. While earning minimum wage, it would take months of saving for a homeless individual to move from a shelter into an affordable housing unit. Such a burden is very difficult to overcome and can lead to crowding of shelters and increased stresses on the resources of local communities.

Increasing the minimum wage (**VOTE YES on ISSUE 2!**) to \$6.85/hr would have plenty of benefits – including bolstering a sagging economy. The number of jobs and small businesses actually grows faster in places where the minimum wage is above the federal minimum. Another positive aspect of Issue 2 is that it requires the minimum wage rise with inflation based on the consumer price index. This means that when costs of living increase, Ohio families will not have to choose between heating and housing. This formula is a good tool to combat poverty.

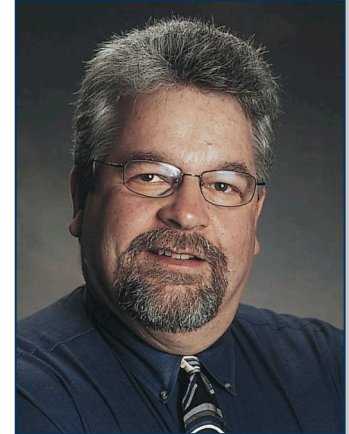
And while we're on the subject of the economy, let's talk about a painless, win-win remedy: lifting the cap on the Ohio Housing Trust Fund. Each year, at least \$15 million over the \$50 million cap is generated from the Housing Trust Fund fee collected by our county recorders. Yet this surplus – money that belongs to the HTF, winds up in the state's general fund.

Think of what the HTF could do with an additional \$15 million! If that amount were put into the state's housing industry, thousands of new jobs would be created and thousands more of Ohio's families

struggling with housing problems would find relief. Leveraging that money could expand it even further; every \$1 the state invests equals \$5 in federal and private resources, creating \$75 million in additional working capital for Ohio.

The need for repairing and growing our additional affordable housing inventory is clear: Ohio holds two of the nation's poorest cities, we rank fourth among states that have lost the most jobs since 2001, more than 1 million Ohioans spent more than 30 percent of their income on housing.

So please, reach out to your state representative and state senate candidates before the November election and have him or her sign the endorsement form located on our website (www.cohhio.org). Remember, HTF money should stay in the HTF! Let's invest it in ways that benefit *all* Ohioans.



Bill Faith,
Executive Director

Minimum-wage decline

The minimum wage is at its lowest value since 1955, when adjusted for inflation. Wages for the nation's lowest paid workers have been stuck at \$5.15 an hour for a decade.



Source: *The Columbus Dispatch*

*Youth are not tomorrow's
leaders...WE NEED THEM
TODAY!!*



Youth Explore Poverty Issues With Local Congregation

When you were a child, did you ever run out of glue when trying to complete a homework assignment? Have you ever been baking cookies and needed to borrow an egg or two from a neighbor? Have you ever been driving to work and needed to call AAA to fix your car in the middle of the interstate? Glue, eggs, and AAA are all resources. In America, money is the typical way we gain access to resources. Other resources, including family and friend support networks are important. It is access to resources that often will determine whether or not we will have housing, food and education.

On September 24th YEP youths met with members of the Clinton Heights Lutheran Church in Columbus to discuss access to resources. Alfred, 21, and Ciera, 17, led a simulation activity that demonstrated inequality in our society. This simulation led the adult and high school Sunday school classes to look into the systemic causes of poverty; especially low wages.

The simulation led to discussion about the minimum wage initiative that will be on the ballot on **November 7th**. YEP is hopeful that the minimum wage amendment will pass, because low-wages are a primary cause of family homelessness and lack of access to



resources.

What would happen if you were trying to get to work and you did not have the resource of AAA, or were trying to complete a homework assignment and did not have glue as a resource, or were trying to bake cookies and had no access to eggs? You might be fired from your job; and surely, you would fail the task at hand. In our world today, there are enough resources for everyone to have a just standard of living, and we need your help on November 7th to help provide a just minimum wage for all Ohioans!

If you are interested in participating in training about poverty in your local school, church or agency please contact Nick Bates at nickbates@cohhio.org or Angela Lariviere at angelal@cohhio.org

Columbus Youths to Speak at Local Conference

Conference sponsored by:

YEP youth will speak on their experiences at the **Sixth Annual Public Forum on Homelessness** *Economic Segregation, Educational Success, and Homelessness*

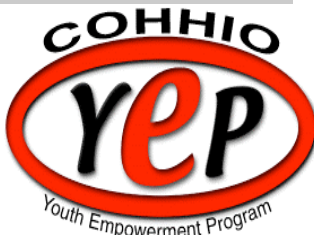
Wednesday, October 18, 2006,
9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Huntington Hall,
Downtown YWCA (65 S. 4th St.)

Register online at
www.columbushomeless.org

**COLUMBUS
COALITION** for
the
HOMELESS

 P.O. BOX 16156
COLUMBUS, OHIO 43216
(614) 252-3257
www.columbushomeless.org

YEP: Uniting Youth for Change



MYTHS AND FACTS: OHIO'S MINIMUM WAGE DEBATE

Myth

Increasing the minimum wage will lead to a loss in jobs.

Fact

Research shows that jobs, payrolls, and number of establishments among small businesses grew more in states with minimum wages above the federal level.

Myth

The paperwork requirements in the minimum wage ballot measure are too burdensome.

Fact

Employers regulated by the U.S. Department of Labor are already

required to maintain employee records for at least three years from the last date of entry as outlined in the minimum wage amendment.

Myth

The minimum wage amendment won't benefit those most in need.

Fact

Almost 300,000 workers would directly benefit from a wage increase and another 423,000 would likely benefit indirectly. Of these, 74% are over age 20. Additionally, more than 250,000 children have a parent who will benefit from an increase in the minimum wage. Among the families impacted, 38% rely solely on the minimum wage worker's weekly earnings.

Increasing the Minimum Wage is Part of a Strategy to Decrease Poverty

The Census Bureau recently named Cleveland and Cincinnati among the nation's most impoverished large cities, with poverty rates of 32.4% and 25% respectively. In an effort to address broader poverty issues, movement to increase Ohio's minimum wage takes on greater importance in part because of its contribution to reducing poverty. While raising the minimum wage should not be the only tool used to reduce poverty, it is an important part of a broader strategy. Following are some key reasons to support raising the minimum wage as part of a poverty reduction strategy.

The value of the minimum wage decreases every year

- Because the federal and Ohio's state minimum wage are not adjusted for inflation, low-wage workers' purchasing power decreases every year. The current value of the minimum wage is at its lowest level in 50 years¹.

Wage inequality and corporate profits have continued to increase

- The average income of the richest 5% of Ohio households is 10.7 times as large as the poorest 20% of households, up from a ratio of 6.9 in the early 1980s².
- Inflation-adjusted corporate profits increased by 50% between 2001 and 2005, to \$931.4 billion³.

Welfare reform forced many parents into the low-wage job market, but minimum wage work cannot lift them out of poverty

- One full-time minimum wage worker earns \$10,700 a year, which is nearly \$3000 below the poverty line for a family of two and \$9000 below the poverty line for a family of four^{4 5}.

Raising the minimum wage impacts many in the low-wage job market, not just those making minimum wage

- Over 700,000 low-wage workers in Ohio, or 14% of the workforce, could

Ohio now has \$994 million in unspent TANF funds; \$473 million is not even obligated and there is no plan in place on how the money will be spent.

HHS Releases State Level TANF Spending Data

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services just released national data on combined federal funds spent in federal fiscal year 2005 (October 1, 2004 - September 30, 2005), and while this is an old story for Ohio, it's the first time we have a chance to compare ourselves to other states. As we expected, Ohio had the highest amount of unobligated TANF dollars in the country, the closest state to

us (New York) had only as much as we did in the unobligated category, and we accounted for roughly 20% of the total amount of unobligated dollars in the country. There is a wealth of other data on the U.S. Department of HHS site that allows you to do a number of other comparisons. —*John Corlett, Center for Community Solutions*

Ohio “Olmstead” Case Proposed Settlement

Ohio Governor Bob Taft and the Ohio Legal Rights Service proposed a settlement yesterday that could move close to 1,500 men and women with disabilities from institutions into more accommodating residences. The settlement would add \$37 million to a continuing effort to move disabled individuals out of institutions and also give \$4.2 million to County MRDD Boards to develop housing for their clients. Ohio's next General Assembly, the 107th, will have to approve the settlement if it is approved by U.S. District Judge Edmund Sargus and the plaintiffs in the case. As the details of the settlement are released and the approval

process moves forward, we must ensure that the General Assembly's regulations ensure that funding developed under “Olmstead” case are only used for “least restrictive” housing. This case may have a significant impact on existing under utilized Section 8 housing and Public Housing building for the elderly and disabled, and it is important that these existing funding streams and sites are not negatively impacted by this settlement. The new funding could be a great step forward and should be the first stream utilized to give men and women with disabilities more appropriate and accommodating housing options.

Increasing the Minimum Wage is Part of a Strategy to Decrease Poverty (con't)

expect a raise either directly from an increase in the minimum wage or indirectly through spillover effects.

worker's weekly earning.

Increasing the state minimum wage would benefit those most in need

- Of those affected by an increase in the minimum wage, 74% are over age 20.
- More than 250,000 children have a parent who will benefit from an increase in the minimum wage.
- Among the families impacted, 38% rely solely on the minimum wage

¹ *Economic Policy Institute (2006, August).*

Minimum wage: Facts at a glance.

² *Economic Policy Institute, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (2006, January).* *Income inequality has increased in Ohio over the past two decades.*

³ *Hanauer, A. (2006, September).* *The state of working Ohio, 2006.* Cleveland, OH: *Policy Matters Ohio.*

⁴ *Center for Policy Alternatives (2006).* Retrieved from

<http://www.stateaction.org/issues/issue.cfm/issue/MinimumWage.xml>

⁵ *U.S. Census Bureau. 2005 Poverty Thresholds.*

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We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.cohhio.org

www.cohhioyep.org

www.OHvotes.org

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Housing Credit Program Update

The Ohio Housing Finance Agency (OHFA) has made some significant changes to the Housing Credit Program (LIHTC) that will take effect soon. Key changes include:

- Implementation of a three-stage application review process
- First deadline is November 2, 2006
- Increased set-aside for permanent supportive housing from 5% to 10% of available credits

First deadline November 2, 2006 - Applications for Experience & Capacity Review

For more information, visit OHFA at www.ohiohome.org.

SAVE THE DATE

**DEVELOPING SOLUTIONS
TO OHIO'S FORECLOSURE CRISIS**
November 14, 2006
Wyndham Hotel, 2 Seagate, Toledo, Ohio

Topics
Tools for Implementing Effective Counseling Programs
Predatory Lending Enforcement
Foreclosure Prevention Best Practices
Improving Communications Between Lenders, Counselors and Consumers
Policy, Legislation and Regulatory Issues

For more information, please contact the Fair Housing Center of Toledo
 **419/243-6163**

Hotel reservations may be made by phoning (419) 241-1411 or 800-WYNDHAM by November 1st. Mention the group name "Fair Housing Center" to receive a discounted rate of \$109 plus tax. There is an additional \$5 discount for AAA Members.

Implementing Ohio's New Anti-Predatory Lending Law

SAVE THE DATE
Friday, NOVEMBER 3, 2006, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Trinity Episcopal Cathedral, 2230 Euclid Ave, Cleveland, OH 44115
Conference Registration \$25. College Students with valid ID are free
CLE's and CEU's pending
Space is limited and reservations should be sent in promptly.
For additional information, contact COHHIO Board Member
Charles Bromley at bromleycharles@yahoo.com

About Our Organization...

COHHIO is a statewide advocacy group and service providers network dedicated to ending homelessness while ensuring that Ohioans have decent, safe, fair, affordable housing, especially those with low-income and special needs.