



Coalition on Homelessness
and Housing in Ohio
COHHIO

For Immediate Release
February 19, 2007

CONTACT: 614-280-1984, Bill Faith, Executive Director
Suzanne Gravette Acker, Dir. Communications

Coalition Uses Presidents' Day to Reflect on Budget Priorities

COLUMBUS - On a holiday associated with consumer spending at local malls, an Ohio coalition is calling for better leadership on spending at the federal level. According to the Ohio Federal Budget Coalition, the White House 2008 budget "cuts taxes for the wealthy while short changing vital services in Ohio," says Cathy Johnston, COHHIO advocacy director and coalition member. "Our federal budget should prioritize investments in the American people through a system of shared taxation."

Members are concerned that the President's plan would disinvest in areas already made vulnerable in Ohio, including health care, energy assistance, affordable housing and food and nutrition. "So many have lost their jobs because of the downturn in the economy," says Lisa Hamler-Fugitt of the Ohio Association of Second Harvest Food Banks. "It's our government's responsibility to provide basic needs for all Ohioans and all Americans."

"The President defends his budget as promoting economic growth while reducing the deficit," says Erika Thoms of the Center for Community Solutions. "In fact, the new tax cuts will lead to more deficit growth. We'll see the state trying to make up for a lot of the funding losses," she adds, "and that will be hard to do, because the state is already strapped."

Dave Rinebolt with Ohio Partners for Affordable Energy says the President's budget doesn't meet the renewable energy goals of the State of the Union address, and could leave Ohioans out in the cold. "The President's budget reduced funding for a number of critical programs for people, including low income energy assistance, weatherization assistance -- the types of things that help people become self-sufficient," Rinebolt says.

Many housing programs also would be in jeopardy, says Johnston. "Funding for public housing would be nearly 6 percent below this year's level," she says, "and housing services for the elderly and those with disabilities would be cut by nearly 30 percent. The development of budget policy should include the needs of all Americans, not just the wealthy."

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175 S. Third St., Columbus, Ohio 43215
Ph: 614-280-1984 Fax: 614-463-1060

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