

OPINION

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Less Talk and More Action Needed to Combat Poverty

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Reps. Charles B. Range, D-N.Y. and Benjamin L. Cardin, D-Md., are calling on the Bush Administration and Congress to take action to fight poverty in light of new Census Bureau data released Friday.

The report showed that the median income level for American families dropped for the second year in a row last year, declining by \$500 to \$42,409.

Census figures also indicate that the percentage of Americans living in poverty increased from 11.3 percent in 2000 to 12.1 percent in 2002. The total number of poor Americans has grown by 3 million during the period.

Rep. Rangel, who is the leading Democrat on the Committee on Ways and Means said, "Income is down and poverty is up for Ameri-

can families. The Bush Administration seems more interested in spending tens of billions of dollars to wage war in Iraq than in doing anything to combat poverty right here in America. We need a national strategy to boost employment and reduce poverty and we are not getting it from this administration."

Rep. Cardin, said "The Census numbers confirm what many of us have already seen in our communities - increasing hardship for America's families. Middle income families have to live on less, while poorer Americans are falling even deeper into poverty."

"Under President Clinton, poverty declined for seven years in a row. Now we see poverty rising again. The families affected by this trend have yet to see the helping

hand promised by so-called compassionate conservatism. They need less talk and more action. An easy first step would be to provide tax relief to the 6.5 million low-income families excluded from the last tax bill," Cardin said.

"We need to make fighting poverty in America a priority before it becomes even worse. If we can afford to occupy nations a half a world away and pay billions to rebuild there, how can we ignore the suffering of working families in our own land? If we can afford to keep hundreds of billions in tax cuts for those who make more than \$200,000 a year, then how can we turn a blind eye to those people who work hard but still can not keep their families from sliding deeper into poverty?" Rangel added.

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Predatory Lenders Prey on People of Color

Practice puts too many in horrific cycle of debt

BY JULIAN BOND
Congratulations to New York State Attorney General Eliot Spitzer for taking a stand on sub-prime lending. Predatory lending is an evil, deceptive



practice aimed primarily at people of color.

Sub-prime lenders prey on African-Americans, the elderly and female heads of households, charging astronomically high rates of interest and imposing excessive fees and penalties. This practice traps millions of individuals in a horrific cycle of debt-slavery.

The NAACP passed resolutions against predatory lending in 2000 and 2002, and has even gone so far as to forbid its units from accepting donations from predatory lenders. It is time for all victims of this practice and for those who are truly concerned about economic empowerment to demand access to reasonable and humane lending practices for all Americans.

I hope that other states will fol-

low New York's lead and pay more attention to economic discrimination in the form of unfair, irresponsible lending practices. This is also an opportune time for financial institutions and responsible lenders to wake up and address the legitimate credit needs of low income people.

Julian Bond, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

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Letter to the Editor

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To Portland with Love

Editor's note: Meaux Craig, a former Portland resident, survived the terrorist attacks of the World Trade Center towers in New York. His horrific and heart wrenching story was shared with readers of The Portland Observer at the time. Now, on the two year anniversary of that dreadful day, his mother, Dee Craig-Arnold of northeast Portland, received the following open letter to the community:

Your love, concern and support have been greatly appreciated. During the darkest hours of my life, I've felt the strength that was much needed. Your unlimited empathy has transformed me into a pillar of strength I've never thought possible (we all have hidden stamina that must be nurtured).

It is my wish that everyone in this world experiences the power of love. The motto I learned at Howard University is that "Luck is when preparation meets opportunity." I guess with the likes of The City of Roses, I've been the luckiest!

As then a person of despair, uncertainty and excruciating mental and physical pain, now two years later I feel almost whole again.

Oregon, lock up the love within your hearts and don't lose the key. Although my heart belongs to Brooklyn, Washington, D.C. and Portland equally, I think when it comes to love; you all won my heart hands down.

P.S. - Please continue to open your hearts to those in need. Meaux Craig

Public Power Proposal Troubling

The North/Northeast Business Association Board of Directors has unanimously voted to oppose the proposal to form a people's utility district in Multnomah County.

A PUD will add an additional burden and uncertainty to our already troubled economy. Condemning existing power facilities in Multnomah County would be a lengthy and disruptive process, costing more than \$1 billion. Furthermore, it's unknown how costly or complicated transitioning from established reliable servers to a PUD would be. And there is no certainty in where a PUD would receive its power and at what cost.

Overall, our belief is that the formation of the Multnomah County PUD puts residents and businesses at risk of higher rates and disruption in services.

Edwina Wasson, North/Northeast Business Association president



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