



2012 Member REPORT



Dear Friends,

Greetings from Poverty Action! I am excited to share our accomplishments so far in 2012, as well as update you about our plans for the remainder of the year.

As always, we have been busy fighting for our network. As our state continues to struggle with the lingering effects of the recession, Poverty Action has once again ramped up our efforts in Olympia, bolstered our organizing efforts in low-income communities and communities of color, and set ambitious goals for our election work.

During the 2012 Legislative Session, we brought nearly 200 people to Olympia to meet with their legislators, trained an additional 300 people on how to take action on policies and budget proposals, and ensured that our legislators heard from Poverty Action members before all major decisions that would impact low-income communities were made. And it worked! The final budget contained no new cuts to critical safety net programs, and some programs, such as Working Connections Child Care, were even restored to previous levels.

While we were thrilled with the results of the state budget, we know our work cannot stop there. This summer we are launching the 39 County project in an effort to step up our organizing and leadership development work in all corners of the state. We know that real people sharing their stories about the economic realities of living on a low income has the power to change the public narrative about poverty, as well as increase support from decision makers.

With a high-stakes election fast approaching, we're hitting the streets to register, educate and mobilize voters through our annual Vote For A Change campaign. We will continue to reach out to previously incarcerated people who are newly eligible to vote under the 2009 Voting Rights Restoration Act.

And finally, I'm excited to announce that we have relaunched our website and updated our logo and materials. Thank you for your continuing support of the Statewide Poverty Action Network. Your generosity and action make our work possible.

Marcy Bowers

STAFF

Marcy Bowers, Executive Director

Kate Baber, Government Relations Manager

Senait Brown, Community Organizer

Danielle Friedman, Campaign Manager

EJ Juarez, Development Coordinator

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Jeffrey Carrol, Spokane

YunHee Choi, Lakewood

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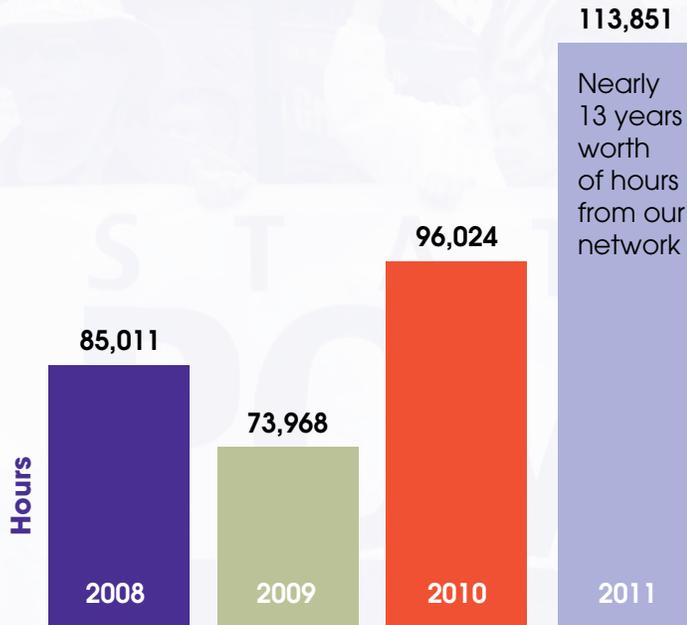
Juanita Maestas, Burien

Jim Morris, Vice Chair, Olympia

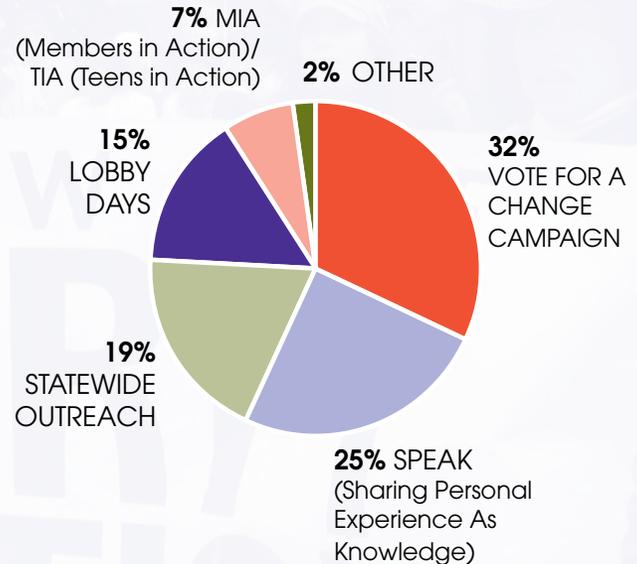
Juan Vega, Seattle

HOW DID VOLUNTEERS TAKE ACTION IN 2011?

Total volunteer hours



2011 volunteer hours



LEGISLATIVE

Standing Stronger: Defending Our Safety Net and Restoring Cuts

During the 2012 Legislative Session our network achieved substantial wins despite one of the most difficult political climates in recent memory. From holding the line on funding our state's safety net to passing significant consumer protections, we have a full slate of accomplishments we are proud to share with you.

Last fall we launched an unprecedented campaign to maintain the integrity of our state's safety net. Our advocacy, paired with real stories from our network, prevented new cuts to programs and services that people across the state depend on to survive. Thanks to your activism, our state's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, Disability Lifeline, State Food Assistance and State Family Assistance programs for immigrant families, and the Basic Health Plan were all left intact. Furthermore, eligibility for Working Connections Childcare was restored from 175% of the

Federal Poverty Level to 200%, a substantial win in a difficult legislative session.

In addition to these amazing accomplishments, we "took back the (TANF) box!" This funny-sounding policy change increases transparency and accountability in our state's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. Previously, the

Governor made all of the decisions about TANF (also called the TANF "box"), allowing the public few opportunities to provide input on the program or its funding. By moving control of the TANF box to the 149 state legislators, we are providing our members with 149 opportunities to influence how TANF is managed.

- Restored full TANF benefits to 2,000 families as a result of the large family cap increase
- Expanded families' access to subsidized child care by restoring the Working Connections Child Care eligibility level to 200% of the Federal Poverty Level
- Maintained dental care for elderly and disabled adults by preventing the elimination of the Adult Dental Program
- Prevented elimination of the State Family Assistance program which helps immigrant families meet their basic needs
- Preserved TANF for 2,000 families, including 4,000 kids, by preventing a 48-month time limit

LEGISLATIVE

Progress for People: Protecting Consumers Against Predatory Financial Practices

57: The number
of bills our network
impacted with member
actions in 2012.

This session Poverty Action passed the following consumer protection bills:

HB 1552- Garnishment

This law allows consumers to keep more money in their pockets during a wage garnishment. Garnishment occurs when an employee's wages are withheld to pay off a third-party debt. This new law also clarifies that pension funds will continue to be exempt from garnishment, ensuring that seniors and people with disabilities will be able to use their pensions to meet their basic needs, even during a garnishment.

HB 2614- Foreclosure Prevention

Last year Washington led the way in ensuring that families facing foreclosure would have the right to a mediation process with their lenders. This new law builds on the Foreclosure Fairness Act, which we passed in 2011, by streamlining the mediation process and providing protections for mediators, as well as homeowners while they work toward saving their home.

SB 6155- Debt Adjusters

This bill puts reasonable regulations on for-profit debt adjusters. For-profit debt adjustment (sometimes called debt settlement) is a rapidly growing fringe financial service. Debt adjusters prey on people living with debt and offer bold "miracle cures" to help eliminate their debt, but often leave families in financial ruin. This legislation will help to prevent deceptive practices that hurt families who are attempting to regain their financial stability.

ELECTORAL

Vote: Bringing Our Priorities to the Top

Poverty Action strives to ensure that the public, media, and decision makers get the story straight from the people. The heart of our work is building political power among people with low incomes whose issues are often ignored. We believe that lawmakers feel more accountable to people who participate in the political process. Frequent voters tend to be white and more affluent, meaning that a small slice of society shapes decisions that impact people with low incomes and people of color.

That's why our Vote For A Change campaign reaches out to voters in low-income communities and communities of color. Every year we set out to register, educate, and mobilize voters to ensure that everyone has a voice in the civic process. This year we're headed to Tacoma, South King County and South Seattle in an effort to reach previously incarcerated voters who saw their right to vote restored under the 2009 Voting Rights Restoration law that we helped pass.

We know it works. Since we first launched our Vote For A Change campaign in 2004, we have contacted over 100,000 voters and increased turnout from those voters by as much as 16%!

"We're reaching people that the candidates and parties are ignoring. We're connecting people to their communities in meaningful ways, helping them gain agency over their lives through the ballot box."

**- Arin Grant,
University Place**

Vote For A Change 2012:

- **2,500:** number of people we will register to vote
- **15,000:** number of households we will reach to talk about ballot measures
- **4:** number of door-to-door canvassing events we will host

MEMBER SPOTLIGHTS



Renee Jones, Kent

"I'm a single mom and I feel the effects of the most regressive tax structure in the nation every day. I'm a member of Poverty Action because together we're a movement of families in our state fighting for an equitable revenue structure where everyone can succeed. Our network has been instrumental in pushing responsible ballot initiatives that support the dignity of everyone in our community.

Deb Haggren, Toppenish

"I'm a member of Poverty Action because I care about making policy reflective of my community's reality. Three out of four households in the United States are not heterosexual couples with biological children. Our families, like our communities, are vibrant, complex and full of potential. I joined Poverty Action to help move the conversation forward on policy that is not based on the fantasy of a family in a 1950's commercial. If we can lift each other up into prosperity, we can change policy, leadership and our future to create a state where policy meets the needs of modern families.

ORGANIZING

Statewide Strength: The Only Secure Community is an Organized Community

Poverty Action mobilizes its members to come together, share their solutions, and create the change they want to see in our state. Real people working together can make the difference. That's why we organize people with low incomes across the state to engage deeply in our democracy, meet with their lawmakers face to face, and help build a common analysis of the root causes of poverty. Most importantly, we help our communities organize to make sure our representatives represent all Washington families.

Members coming together to discuss issues and take collective action is critical to our success. During our Members In Action and Teens In Action events, members help us move our values forward in Olympia by strategizing and taking direct action using innovative tactics. A signature element of our organizing work is our Advocacy Trainings which happen throughout the year all over Washington. Here, our members gain skills to meet with lawmakers, learn what it takes to pass policy that supports our families, and participate in shaping our campaigns in Olympia. Last year we conducted over 60 trainings in 10 cities.

This summer, Poverty Action is launching the 39 County Project to document the stories of people with low incomes. In addition to our on-going advocacy and organizing work, we are building leaders

from low-income communities and communities of color who can step up to change the narrative around poverty. From our years of working in Olympia we know that lawmakers respond to personal stories that illustrate the difficult economic realities people face. But it's not just lawmakers who need to hear these stories; it's the media, the electoral candidates, and the general public who need to have a better understanding of what it means to live on a low income in Washington state.

We want to hear from you! We are collecting videos and stories from real people in all 39 counties who work hard every day but still struggle to get by. We will help you craft and document your story - either in written or video form, and then we will post your story on our website and distribute it to lawmakers and the media. After that, we will work with you to meet with your lawmakers to share that story in person or at a hearing during the legislative session.

By increasing the visibility of people living in poverty and training leaders and spokespeople, we can shift the public perceptions of what it means to be poor in Washington. This new narrative around poverty will create incredible opportunities to end the root causes of poverty and create opportunities for everyone to prosper.

STATEWIDE PRESENCE

IN KLUCKITAT COUNTY:



"I believe that without action nothing will change. Poverty Action's Advocacy Trainings helped me bring back skills to my community to make change at the local level here in rural Washington. By being connected with others around the state, I'm part of something that's building a better future for my family and my community."

Roland Saylor, Goldendale

IN PIERCE COUNTY:



"When transportation cuts started to affect my commute to my job as a janitor at Swedish Edmonds Hospital, I knew that I could not just sit back and let it happen. I started to get involved with Poverty Action and went to a training about how to meet with lawmakers to preserve our state's safety net. After going to Olympia to talk about TANF cuts, I took that experience and put it to use in my community. Poverty Action helped me craft and practice my ask and gave me tools to help prevent devastating cuts to my bus route."

Sireah Enwezor, Tacoma

IN CLALLAM COUNTY:



"I was fighting with Chase Bank every day. I was about to lose my home. Then I found out about Poverty Action's Foreclosure Advocacy workshop from a friend and decided to go. I learned that there were thousands of people across the state struggling with predatory lending from big banks. We met at a community center here in town and that is when I realized I was not fighting them alone. I had the power of 8,000 members of Poverty Action with me to help hold banks accountable. I talked with my legislators and we ended up passing the Foreclosure Fairness Act and helping people stay in their homes and work with lenders to pay off their debt."

Greg Hagstrom, Sequim

OUR NETWORK

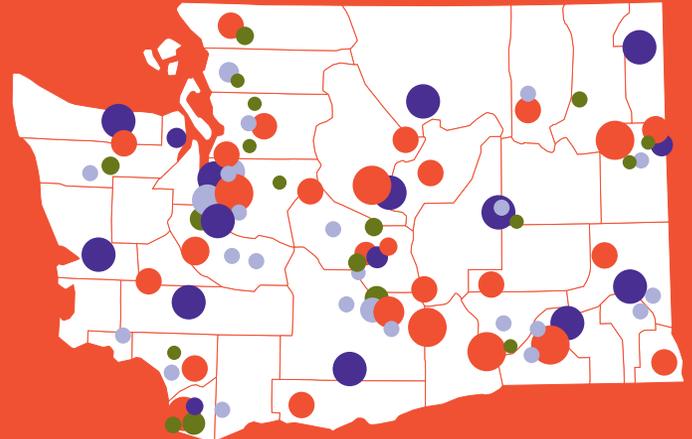
Poverty Action: Member Driven, Member Led

When our network was founded in 1996 by ten community leaders, we believed then what we hold as a central truth now: that everyone in our state should be able to meet their basic needs and have the opportunity to prosper. With over 8,000 members in Washington, our network is the largest of its kind in the Pacific Northwest, combining smart, innovative advocacy with on-the-ground organizing.

Our work is guided by a Board that is representative of our membership and our legislative priorities are our membership's priorities. Poverty Action holds listening sessions across the state to hear what issues you are facing and your ideas for solutions. In 2011, we hosted six sessions across the state, one each in Tacoma, Yakima, Port Angeles, Kent, Spokane, and Vancouver. This summer we are headed to Bellevue and Walla Walla.

To ensure that we are accountable to our constituency, Poverty Action's Board always consists of at least 50% people with low incomes, 50% people of color and 50% people living outside the Seattle area, with the Board Chair always a person with a low income.

Poverty Action Membership Across the State



MEMBER SPOTLIGHTS

Julia Gaylord, Seattle

SPEAK (Sharing Personal Experience As Knowledge) INTERN

For the past several years Poverty Action has had strong partnerships with local universities to engage undergraduate and graduate students to gain real world advocacy experience with Poverty Action. This year, Julia Gaylord joined the team and was instrumental in moving our SPEAK program forward during the legislative session and helping connect members to lawmakers who needed to hear their stories. Julia recently graduated from the University of Washington and plans to continue her involvement with the network by volunteering for the Vote for A Change Campaign. Congratulations Julia!

Vernon Loke, Spokane

BOARD MEMBER

We are excited to introduce our newest board member, Vernon Loke, Ph.D. A professor and nationally recognized leader on asset building, Dr. Loke joined our board in May 2012. As a full-time professor at Eastern Washington University's School of Social Work, his research focuses on social economic development, international social work, and asset-building policies and practices at the local, national and international levels. Dr. Loke was born in Singapore and resides in Spokane with his wife and children. Please join us in welcoming Dr. Loke to our Coordinating Board!



THANK YOU TO OUR 2011 SUPPORTERS

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Cindy Schu
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WAYS TO TAKE ACTION

1 JOIN

Join Poverty Action and make your voice heard in the fight against poverty. You'll be updated on current issues and receive action tools to help make a difference! Mail in the membership form on the next page or donate online at povertyaction.org.

2 SPEAK

SPEAK (Sharing Personal Experience As Knowledge) up and share your story. Tell us your struggles, insights, and recommendations of how you would change public policies. Your story can make a difference with lawmakers and the media.

3 MEET

Meet with your lawmakers in Olympia. We'll help you plan your visit, schedule your appointments, help you find your lawmaker's offices, and assist you during your visit to the Capitol.

4 SIGN UP

Sign up to receive the Network News, Poverty Action's email alerts. We'll keep you up-to-date throughout the legislative session and the year on how you can take action and weigh in on important policy and election decisions. Sign up at povertyaction.org.

5 VOLUNTEER

Volunteer at Poverty Action! If you have the time, we've got the opportunities for you to make a difference. Help out at our Seattle office or in your community. Tell us about yourself and we'll find a project to match your location, skills, and interests. Call us toll-free at 1-866-789-7726 or sign up at povertyaction.org to have a staff member get in touch and get you plugged into the network.

"I believe in Poverty Action. With the innovative solutions that this network provides, we can build a stronger state where everyone can meet their basic needs and have a chance to prosper. That is why I'm a member. Join our movement and be part of the largest and most respected anti-poverty organization in our state."

-Tim Farrell, Lynnwood



JOIN Poverty Action!

Our members are our **STRONGEST** asset. *Yes, I want to join Statewide Poverty Action Network!*

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____ EMAIL _____

I will join with a donation of: \$10 \$35 \$60 \$100 \$150 Other

Unless you wish to join as an organization, please give your home address so that Poverty Action can connect you with your local legislators. Please cut out this post card and send it with your donation to the Statewide Poverty Action Network, 1501 N. 45th St., Seattle, WA 98103. The Statewide Poverty Action Network is a project of Solid Ground, registered with the Secretary of State as a charitable organization under Chapter 9.09 of the RCW. For information on Solid Ground finances call 1-800-332-GIVE. Your donation is 100% tax deductible. Tax ID #23-7421892

Our Mission

The Statewide Poverty Action Network builds grassroots power to end causes of poverty and create opportunities for everyone to prosper.

Our Vision

Poverty Action envisions a state where people of all income levels fully promote and participate in building the fabric of socially, politically, and economically just communities.

What We Do

- Develop and advocate for innovative public policy solutions that address the root causes of poverty;
- Register, educate, and mobilize voters from low-income communities and communities of color;
- Engage community members in advocating for the issues that impact their lives;
- Organize community members through a racial equity lens; and
- Develop leaders in low-income communities.

Because we all want a better future!



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