

From: news@piconetwork.org on behalf of PICO National Network [news@piconetwork.org]

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Tuesday, February 20, 2007

HEALTHY FAMILIES

Faith and Families Summit on Children's Health

On March 7 PICO will hold a summit on children's health in Washington, DC. Congress has begun debating the reauthorization of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), which provides coverage to 6 million children. Another 9 million children are still uninsured. As part of a campaign to expand coverage for children and families, PICO is building support for a 5-point road map to cover all children by 2012. For more information see PICO's [Cover All Children Campaign](#).

PICO Parent Puts a Human Face on the Goal of Covering all Children

Susan Molina, Board Chair of PICO's Denver affiliate [Metro Organizations for People](#), testified before the House Energy and Commerce Committee. She spoke about being a single parent and of losing SCHIP health coverage for her children when she got a new job that paid just above 200 percent of poverty. She told the Committee that "working families need to know that if our jobs don't offer affordable family coverage we have another option for our children." Susan is helping lead a campaign in Colorado to cover all children. Click [here](#) to listen to her testimony. [Read more>>](#)



Santa Clara County Congregations Organize for Universal Health Coverage

An over-capacity crowd exceeding 500 gathered at a Los Gatos synagogue to press county supervisors and state and local legislators to support of legislation that would guarantee health coverage for everyone in the county. [Peninsula Interfaith Action](#) and [People Acting in Community Together](#) organized the event and have been working together for months to advance the innovative initiative that would cover the estimated 200,000 Santa Clara County residents who have no health insurance. [Read More>>](#)

California Proposal Adds Pressure on Congress to Fund Children's Health

California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger announced a plan to extend health coverage to the 6.5 million Californians who are uninsured, including 750,000 children. This was a significant victory for PICO California in its efforts to win health coverage for every California child as its proposal was included in the Governor's plan. However, the plan faces stiff opposition from several interests and requires significant new funding from Washington. [Read more>>](#)

SAFE NEIGHBORHOODS

Regional Approach to Eradicating Gangs

Residents, clergy, and officials of Santa Monica, Venice, and Los Angeles were all in attendance as the new Police Chief of Santa Monica pledged to work regionally to eliminate gang violence. For LA Voice, it was the second large public meeting on the issue in three months. Four members of Santa Monica's city council, including the mayor, agreed to organize a neighborhood watch program, and the Chamber of Commerce committed to create a job program for youth.

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Community Policing in Brevard County, Florida

The Police Chief in Palm Beach followed through on his word when 41 suspected drug dealers were picked up in one day last November. [Congregations for Community Action](#) (CCA) had organized a meeting with him a few months earlier to testify about the crime in their neighborhoods and to hear him agree to address it. The Police Chief now teaches the CCA partnership with his police force as a model of police-community relations. [Read More>>](#)

Brockton Puts Focus on Crime

More than 500 gathered in the basement of a Brockton, MA, church to ask the city's mayor and police chief to adopt their proposals on reducing violent crime. [Brockton Interfaith Community](#) leaders began researching solutions after three homicides were committed in seven days in early September. The mayor agreed to seek funding for after-school activities and to engage the business community to employ more teens. He and the police chief also agreed to meet with the chief of the Providence police department to learn about their community policing program. [Read more>>](#)

IMMIGRATION

Contra Costa Cities Resist ICE's Tactics

A gathering of 500 frightened and angry immigrant families organized by [Contra Costa Interfaith Sponsoring Committee \(CCISCO\)](#) recently heard the mayor of Richmond, California agree to formally protest raids by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). DHS' enforcement wing, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE, has arrested 119 people in Contra Costa County over the past few weeks in an operation purportedly targeting undocumented immigrants with criminal records. However, only 18 of those arrested were criminals. CCISCO hastily organized the public meeting to call on officials from the affected areas to take a stand. [Read more>>](#)

HOUSING

Queens Fights for Equal Treatment

Thanks to [Queens Congregations United for Action](#) (QCUA), the New York State Legislature is considering legislation that would add protections for Queens to an affordable housing ordinance passed by the New York City Council in December. The city legislation offers tax incentives to developers in large swaths of Manhattan and Brooklyn if 20% of their units are affordable to low- and median-income households. Developers in Queens, however, get the same incentives without having to include affordable units. Median rent in Queens rose 7.2% from 2002 to 2005 while household income fell 6.6%. The state legislature must approve the bill before it becomes law next year, and QCUA has mounted a campaign to convince state lawmakers to give Queens equal treatment. [Read more>>](#)

NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION

Protecting People and Property in Florida

Leaders from [Federation of Congregations United to Serve](#) (FOCUS) recently celebrated an emotional victory when seven new fire hydrants were installed in an Orange County neighborhood. An elderly woman died during a blaze in her nearby home last year when fire fighters were hampered by unworking hydrants. FOCUS also gained agreement for an accelerated schedule of hydrant inspections throughout Orange County. [Read more>>](#)

Water Improvements Won in Cathedral City

Cathedral City, CA, is building a new sanitary central sewer making septic systems unnecessary for the first time. [Inland Congregations United for Change](#) (ICUC) worked closely with the city to establish an assesment district, Dream Homes, that will receive more than \$9 million for the improvements, including funds to cover the rebuilding of streets, curbs, and gutters. A remarkable 89.9% of voters approved the district due to strong neighborhood organizing by ICUC leaders. [Read More>>](#)

ECONOMIC SECURITY

Massachusetts Hikes Minimum Wage

Minimum wage workers in the state of Massachusetts have received a pay raise from \$6.75 an hour to \$7.50 an hour. This will give approximately 107,000 workers an annual pay boost of \$1,560. [Massachusetts Communities Action Network](#) (MCAN) successfully fought for the raise, along with several unions and community groups. The minimum wage will increase again to \$8.00 an hour on January 1, 2008, making it the highest minimum wage in the nation. Today's increase is expected to also boost the pay for another 208,000 low-wage workers who earn slightly more than \$7.50. The federal minimum wage has stagnated at \$5.15 since 1997. [Read more>>](#)

JOBS

PICO federations in Vermont, Massachusetts, Michigan, and California have job

openings. Visit www.piconetwork.org/ab_careers.html to see current jobs and learn more about working in the PICO network.

PICO needs your financial support

PICO's success in empowering families and improving communities depends on financial contributions from our donors. To help support our work on the issues you've read about in this issue of e-news and others, click [here](#) to make an on-line donation.

Working Assets selects PICO for Donor Program

PICO National Network has been chosen as one of 48 recipients of the Working Assets 2007 Donor Program. Working Assets customers (long distance, wireless, and credit card) vote for which organization they want to support. You must be a Working Assets customer to vote for PICO. [Join Working Assets now.](#)

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PICO National Network 171 Santa Rosa Avenue, Oakland, California 94610 510 655 4816

www.piconetwork.org