

NEWS RELEASE

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LSNJ ANALYSIS OF NEW JERSEY IMPACTS FROM TODAY'S CENSUS BUREAU DATA RELEASE

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EDISON – The poverty data released today by the U.S. Census Bureau in the American Community Survey show that, even two years after the end of the recession, poverty in New Jersey remains “disturbingly high, at record levels for our state,” says Legal Services of New Jersey president Melville D. Miller, Jr.

“The latest federal statistics show there are more people in our state struggling in poverty than during any period in half a century,” says Miller. “That can cripple the development of our children and our state’s economic and social future.”

Allan Lichtenstein, director of the Legal Services Poverty Research Institute, added, “Our research, most notably our recent study – ‘Food, Clothing, Health or a Home?’ – underscores that, for the poor in New Jersey, life has been getting progressively worse. For them the very basics – putting enough food on the table, decent housing, adequate clothing, having transportation just to get to work – are a daily challenge with all-too-often troubling results.”

(Note: The above study may be viewed at

<http://www.lsnj.org/PDFs/PovertyResearchInstitute/IncomeInadequacyReport.pdf>.)

The Census reported that, by the end of last year, there were 897,376 New Jerseyans in poverty; that is, those with incomes below 100 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) which, for example, defines poverty as \$22,811 for a family of four or \$18,123 for one parent with two kids.

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Shivi Prasad, senior researcher and policy analyst for the Poverty Research Institute, said the FPL severely understates what poverty really amounts to, especially in a high cost of living state like New Jersey. A far better gauge is at least 200 percent of the FPL, and at that level there are more than 2 million New Jersey people in poverty, including more than 600,000 children.

“That’s one of every four of our residents struggling in one of the richest states in the nation,” Miller said. “This situation is simply appalling.”

Lichtenstein noted that, while the poverty rate in New Jersey remained virtually unchanged, going from 10.3 percent in 2010 to 10.4 percent last year, there has actually been a 23 percent increase in the number of New Jerseyans falling into poverty since the recession began in 2007 when the poverty rate then was 8.6 percent.

“Essentially, since the onset of the recession, nearly 170,000 more New Jerseyans, including many from the middle class, have fallen into the ranks of the impoverished, and that’s just at 100 percent of the FPL,” Prasad said. “They have seen their circumstances deteriorate and unfortunately, with unemployment remaining so high in New Jersey, the situation does not appear likely to improve anytime soon.”

Legal Services of New Jersey is the coordinating office of the state’s system of Legal Services programs, which provide essential legal aid in civil matters to low-income people in all 21 counties of New Jersey. The LSNJ Poverty Research Institute, established in 1997, conducts systemic research on the incidence of poverty, in an effort to increase awareness and understanding.

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