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Hearing — Leave No Family Behind: How Can We Reduce the Rising Number of American Families Living in Poverty?

Nov 5, 2008 6:50PM

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Leave No Family Behind: How Can We Reduce the Rising Number of American Families Living in Poverty?

Source: U.S. Congress Joint Economic Committee

U.S. Senator Charles E. Schumer and Representative Carolyn B. Maloney, Chairman and Vice Chair respectively of the Joint Economic Committee (JEC), held a hearing on poverty in the United States on Thursday, September 25, 2008 at 10:00 am in Room 562 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building. The JEC hearing entitled, "Leave No Family Behind: How Can We Reduce the Rising Number of American Families Living in Poverty?", featured Mayor David N. Cicilline and poverty experts who examined whether the outdated federal poverty measurements are preventing resources from reaching families and elderly Americans and what legislation may be appropriate to drastically reduce the number of U.S. families living in poverty. Since 2000, the number of Americans living in poverty jumped by 5.7 million to 37.3 million; and the poverty rate rose to 12.5 percent in 2007.

Testimonies in PDF.

From Wall Street to Main Street: Understanding How the Credit Crisis Affects You

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From Wall Street to Main Street: Understanding How the Credit Crisis Affects You

Source: U.S. Congress Joint Economic Committee

The Joint Economic Committee produced the report, "From Wall Street to Main Street: Understanding How the Credit Crisis Affects You," to use as an informational tool. It provides a common sense explanation of the current credit crisis and how it affects hard working Americans.

+ Full Document (PDF; 796 KB)

FTC Charges Marketers with Operating a Postal Job Scheme

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FTC Charges Marketers with Operating a Postal Job Scheme

Source: Federal Trade Commission

The Federal Trade Commission has charged a nationwide marketing operation with violating federal law by deceiving consumers into buying materials they thought would help them get federal postal jobs. A federal judge has issued a preliminary order prohibiting the defendants from misrepresenting that they are affiliated with, or endorsed by, the U.S. Postal Service (USPS). The FTC seeks to bar the defendants from further violations and to obtain redress for affected consumers.

According to the FTC's complaint, the defendants have advertised falsely that postal jobs paying an average of

\$20 per hour or \$57,000 per year are available. Consumers who call a toll-free number in response to the defendants' ads and answer some questions are told that they "qualify for a position" and that jobs are open in their geographic area.

As stated in the complaint, consumers are also told that, for a fee ranging from \$120 to \$140, they will receive materials that will help them pass the postal exam, and that if they pass they'll be hired by the USPS. The materials they receive include a book recounting the history of the postal service, exam instructions, and some "practice exams," but nothing about exam dates or job openings.

+ Federal Trade Commission, Plaintiff, v. U.S. Work Alliance, Inc...

Fact sheet: Protecting voting rights and prosecuting voter fraud

Nov 5, 2008 6:28PM

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Fact sheet: Protecting voting rights and prosecuting voter fraud (PDF; 35 KB)

Source: U.S. Department of Justice

Among the Department of Justice's highest priorities are protecting voting rights and combating voter fraud. The Department's Civil Rights Division enforces specific federal laws that help to ensure all qualified voters have an opportunity to cast their ballots and have them counted, while the Department's Criminal Division oversees the nationwide enforcement of federal laws t integrity of the federal election process.

Prevention of Influenza: Recommendations for Influenza Immunization of Children, 2008–2009

Nov 5, 2008 6:28PM

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Prevention of Influenza: Recommendations for Influenza Immunization of Children, 2008–2009

Source: Pediatrics

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends annual influenza immunization for the following groups:

1. All children, both healthy and with high-risk conditions, aged 6 months through 18 years

2. Household contacts and out-of-home care providers of:

2. + Children with high-risk conditions

2. + Healthy children younger than 5 years of age

3. Any female who will be pregnant during influenza season

4. Health care professionals

World of Work Report 2008 - Global income inequality gap is vast and growing

Nov 5, 2008 6:28PM

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World of Work Report 2008 - Global income inequality gap is vast and growing

Source: International Labour Organization

Despite strong economic growth that produced millions of new jobs since the early 1990s, income inequality grew dramatically in most regions of the world and is expected to increase due to the current global financial crisis, according to a new study published today by the research arm of the International Labour Organization (ILO).

The new report, entitled World of Work Report 2008: Income inequalities in the age of financial globalization, produced by the ILO's International Institute for Labour Studies also notes that a major share of the cost of the financial and economic crisis will be borne by hundreds of millions of people who haven't shared in the benefits of recent growth.

+ Full Report (PDF; 1.4 MB)

Hat tip: UN Pulse

Survey Results Show Negative Impact of Medicare Part D "Classes of Clinical Concern"

Nov 5, 2008 6:28PM

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Survey Results Show Negative Impact of Medicare Part D "Classes of Clinical Concern"

Source: Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy

A report of survey results issued by the Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy indicates that current

government regulations requiring Medicare's Part D prescription drug plans to include all drugs in certain designated classes could be costing US taxpayers an additional \$511 million per year. A new law, which could lead to an expansion of the number of drug classes, could increase that cost substantially. "Although enacted with the best intentions, the new law leaves the door open to even higher future costs," states Judith A. Cahill, CEBS, executive director of the Academy, "We believe it's not necessary. Patients' abilities to obtain the medications they require are already adequately protected."

+ Full Report (PDF; 428 KB)

New From the GAO

Nov 5, 2008 6:19PM

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New GAO Report (PDFs)

Source: Government Accountability Office

1. Plan Colombia: Drug Reduction Goals Were Not Fully Met, but Security Has Improved; U.S. Agencies Need More Detailed Plans for Reducing Assistance

Highlights ||| Full Report

Amtrak Ridership Posts Another Record

Nov 5, 2008 2:06AM

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Amtrak Ridership Posts Another Record

Source: National Railroad Passenger Corporation

Final figures for the Amtrak fiscal year show more people are opting for the Amtrak Heartland Flyer train between Oklahoma City and Fort Worth, with ridership rising by more than 18 percent to total 80,892 for the 12 months ending Sept. 30.

Amtrak operates the Heartland Flyer (Trains 821 & 822) under contracts with the Oklahoma and Texas state transportation departments. These are two of the 14 states for which Amtrak operates service that supplements the national network of Amtrak trains.

+ Heartland Flyer FY08 Ridership and Revenue Chart (PDF; 19 KB)

State Revenues Plummet: July-September Revenue Numbers Are Worst in Years

Nov 5, 2008 2:05AM

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State Revenues Plummet: July-September Revenue Numbers Are Worst in Years

Source: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

From press release:

The weak economy is generating great fiscal distress among states. Because states cannot run deficits, they must close their shortfalls by cutting spending or raising taxes. That causes two further problems. First, their spending cuts and tax increases take money out of the economy, making the downturn even worse. Second, as states have to cut back, they cannot respond to the rising need for health care and other services that occurs when workers lose jobs or are otherwise hit by the economic downturn.

The EU's Target for Renewable Energy: 20% by 2020

Nov 5, 2008 2:05AM

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The EU's Target for Renewable Energy: 20% by 2020

Source: UK House of Lords European Union Committee

From the Foreword:

In January 2008, the Commission published the 20 20 by 2020 package. This includes proposals for reducing the EU's greenhouse gas emissions by 20% and increasing its proportion of final energy consumption from renewable sources to 20%. Both of these targets are to be achieved by 2020. In order to meet the EU renewable energy target each Member State will be given a national target to meet based on their existing renewable generation, their GDP and a flat-rate increase for all. The UK's proposed target is 15%.

We conclude that the target level and date are underpinned both by analysis of what is feasible for the EU and by political considerations. We are concerned, however, that achieving 20% of energy from renewable sources by 2020 will be extremely challenging. We note that in a push to meet the target emerging renewable technologies may be neglected and investment may not

be aimed at the most cost effective renewable generation technologies over the long term. We recommend, therefore, that the Government increase their support for research.

We also recommend that the Commission consider regularly the impact on emerging technologies of Member States' efforts to meet the target.

The Commission's proposals include creating a standardised Guarantee of Origin (GoO) certification scheme for renewable energy. This would allow a market in GoO certificates to be created. Member States could then meet part of their targets by counting energy generated in another country for which they have bought the GoO certificate. The Commission believes this will create the flexibility needed for Member States to meet their targets. We recognise that some flexibility will be necessary, but are concerned that GoO trading has the potential to undermine efforts to increase renewable generation domestically. We recommend that the Government commit to achieving a significant proportion of the UK's target domestically.

We conclude that reducing the absolute level of final energy consumption through energy efficiency and saving measures should be the starting point of the Government's strategy for meeting the target. We believe that by spring 2009 the Government should commit to an energy consumption reduction target, such as 20% by 2020, and publish a comprehensive strategy specifying the steps needed to achieve this.

+ Full Report (PDF; 507 KB)

Amber Waves November 2008 – Many Factors Contribute to Fluctuating Global Food Prices

Nov 4, 2008 9:59PM

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Amber Waves November 2008 – Many Factors Contribute to Fluctuating Global Food Prices

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service

Feature articles in the November 2008 issue include ... Fluctuating Food Commodity Prices—A Complex Issue With No Easy Answers; New Market Realities Affect Crop Program Choices; Can Low-Income Americans Afford a Healthy Diet?; Market Failures: When the Invisible Hand Gets Shaky; A Pilot Program for U.S. Food Aid; Lasting Influence of BSE on U.S. Protein Feed Markets;

Stabilizing Federal Support for Emergency Food Providers; 2008 Farm Act Makes It Easier for Food Assistance Households To Save; Conservation Reserve Program Acreage to Decline; Will Benefits Also Fall?; Conservation Program Provision May Have Limited Impact on Underserved Farmer Participation; New Payment Limits, Lower Income Cap Unlikely to Have Significant Impact; Child Health and Well-Being Differ for Metro and Nonmetro Low-Income Households; 2008 Farm Act: Where Will the Money Go?; The issue also includes selected statistics on agriculture and trade, diet and health, natural resources, farm households, and rural America.

RAND Study Is First to Link Viewing of Sexual Content on Television to Subsequent Teen Pregnancy

Nov 4, 2008 9:00PM

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RAND Study Is First to Link Viewing of Sexual Content on Television to Subsequent Teen Pregnancy

Source: RAND Corporation

Adolescents who have high levels of exposure to television programs that contain sexual content are twice as likely to be involved in a pregnancy over the following three years as their peers who watch few such shows, according to a new RAND Corporation study.

The study, published in the November edition of the journal *Pediatrics*, is the first to establish a link between teenagers' exposure to sexual content on TV and either pregnancies among girls or responsibility for pregnancies among boys.

+ Abstract

+ Research Brief

+ RAND — Influences on Adolescent Sexual Behavior

An Analysis of NASA's Plans for Continuing Human Spaceflight After Retiring the Space Shuttle

Nov 4, 2008 8:54PM

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An Analysis of NASA's Plans for Continuing Human Spaceflight After Retiring the Space Shuttle

Source: Congressional Budget Office

CBO's analysis of NASA's Constellation Program points to several general conclusions:

+ The five-year gap in U.S. human spaceflight between the retirement of the space shuttle, in September 2010, and the achievement of initial operating capability for Ares 1 and Orion, in March 2015, might increase if NASA could not avoid the risks to the successful completion of those projects that it and others (in particular, the Government Accountability Office, or GAO) have identified in the Constellation Program.¹ Those risks include an increase during development in the mass of the Orion vehicle that would exceed the capability of the Ares 1 to lift it into orbit; excessive thrust oscillation in the first stage of the Ares 1 and less-than-required performance during the rocket's launch; a longer-than-expected development period for the J-2X engine of the Ares 1's second, or upper, stage; and NASA's inability to develop and fabricate effective heat shields for the Orion within its current development schedule.

+ The potential problems that those risks represent could require additional time and money to resolve. NASA's current plans include an allowance of almost \$7 billion to ensure that the Ares 1 and Orion achieve initial operating capability according to the current schedule. (Unless otherwise noted, dollar amounts are expressed as 2009 dollars of budget authority.) NASA staff indicate that those reserves imply a 65 percent level of confidence that the IOC milestone will be met as planned. However, CBO's 2004 analysis of the growth of costs in previous NASA programs indicates that the costs that the agency currently foresees for the Ares 1 and Orion programs could rise by 50 percent.² Accommodating that cost growth would require as much as \$7 billion more than NASA has budgeted, CBO estimates. Moreover, if NASA's total budget grew by no more than 2 percent annually, such cost increases, in CBO's estimation, would imply a delay of as much as 18 months beyond March 2015 for the vehicles to achieve the IOC milestone.

+ The five-year gap in U.S. human spaceflight could also increase if delays consistent with past space shuttle

missions occurred in launching the remaining missions needed to complete construction of the International Space Station. Such delays could postpone retirement of the shuttle, thereby increasing the funding needed for its operations and, under a constrained total NASA budget, decreasing the funding available to the Constellation Program. A one-year delay in retiring the space shuttle, CBO estimates, would result in a corresponding one-year delay in achieving initial operating capability for Ares 1 and Orion. NASA officials estimate that the probability that the shuttle can complete its 10 remaining missions by September 2010 is between 40 percent and 69 percent; CBO estimates that a delay is more likely and that the probability of carrying out those missions on that timetable is between 20 percent and 60 percent.³ NASA has also stated that if delays occurred that required missions to be flown after September 2010, it might cancel those missions so as not to use funding that would otherwise have been reallocated to the Ares 1 and Orion programs.

+ NASA's decision to accommodate the \$577 million reduction in its 2007 funding by forgoing robotic surface exploration of the moon has the potential to delay the launch of the Constellation Program's first human lunar missions beyond 2020.

Stock Market Fluctuations and Retiree Income: An Update

Nov 4, 2008 8:42PM

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Stock Market Fluctuations and Retiree Income: An Update

Source: Brookings Institution

The recent plunge in home values and even bigger dive in stock prices offer painful reminders of why Social Security seemed like such a good idea in the 1930s. Benefits are predictable, are guaranteed by the government, and are adjusted every year to keep their purchasing power stable. In contrast, workers who count on the stock market to fund their retirement have seen their savings shrink more than 40% over the past year. The question is: what kind of retirement plan offers the best guarantee workers will receive a predictable and comfortable income when they grow old?

Luckily for most older Americans, the cornerstone of their retirement income is still a Social Security check. Social Security plays a crucial role in maintaining the incomes of Americans past the age of 65. Last year it accounted for 39% of the total income received by the elderly. It is a

particularly important source of income for low-income seniors. For aged Americans in the bottom one-fifth of the income distribution, it accounts for nearly \$9 out of every \$10 they receive. The benefits and returns are more secure than incomes from private saving accounts, and they are indexed to inflation, which is rarely the case for private pensions or annuities.

+ Full Document (PDF; 66 KB)
