

**AGENDA FOR CHANGE: AN ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER  
ST. LAWRENCE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST DISTRICT  
JANUARY 2008**

Dick Gilbert - SLUUD Social Justice Coordinator ([rsgilbert@uuma.org](mailto:rsgilbert@uuma.org))

(Deadline for February issue is January 31)

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**Social Justice Events Calendar**  
(See UUSC Corner for other dates)

February 1-3: Allies for Racial Equity (ARE) Annual Conference Memphis, TN.  
March 1: Deadline for Congregational Comments on the current UUA Congregational Study Action Issues, "Peacemaking"  
March 10: Family Planning Advocates 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference: "It's up to us in '08" – Empire State Plaza Convention Center, Albany – to register go to [www.fpaofnys.org](http://www.fpaofnys.org)  
March 16: Interfaith Impact of NYS Briefing in Rochester: "Marriage Equality: Love, Leviticus and the Legislature" – Contact Judy Swartz at [schwartz179@earthlink.net](mailto:schwartz179@earthlink.net)  
April 3-5: Intergenerational UU United Nations Seminar in New York City. "Picking Up the Pieces: Building a Culture of Peace. For more information go to [www.uu-uno.org](http://www.uu-uno.org) or [springseminar@uu-uno.org](mailto:springseminar@uu-uno.org)  
April 25-26: St. Lawrence District Assembly in Binghamton/Owego. Assembly Theme: *Sustainable Earth – A Call to Action*. There will be a Social Justice Council Workshop on *Democracy as a Religious Principle: UU Values in the 2008 Election*. See program in Social Justice Council News below.  
April 28: Interfaith Impact of NYS Advocacy Day in Albany.  
April 29: Equality and Justice Day – Empire State Pride Agenda  
May 6: Clergy Day for Concerned Clergy for Choice – [info@edfundpa.org](mailto:info@edfundpa.org)

## **EDITORIAL: The Poor Peoples' State of the State**

Richard S. Gilbert

The Governor's "State of the State" message had something for almost everyone. And there were a few gestures toward "the vision thing" ("What is our vision? Quite simply to make New York the best place in the world to live, work, and raise a family – to make it, once again, the center of economic growth and opportunity.")

However, there was little or nothing for people who aren't making it in our high competitive economy. It is the "predicament of the prosperous" to believe that anyone can make it with a little elbow grease. But those who need public welfare to survive received not even a mention from the governor.

He is very worried about us middle class taxpayers – a possible cap on property taxes, a "read my lips - no new taxes" mantra, and tax cuts. And, of course, those Wall Street traders who are paying at a lower rate than wage earners mustn't be taxed like the rest of us. Where is it written in the stars that taxation is evil?

But New York State has not increased its welfare grant in 18 years despite a constitutional mandate to care for the needy. There was no mention of TANF renewal, the 1996 welfare reform bill that is heavy on the stick, light on the carrot. Yet 2.76 million New Yorkers (including 923,000 children) are living at or below the poverty line, at 14.7% the eleventh highest poverty rate in the country and in one of the richest states.

Evidently, only the middle class and above are New York State citizens who matter. But, give the governor another chance. He rolls out his budget in a few weeks, and a budget is a values clarification tool to see what he – and we – really believe. If you would like to help him construct that budget write or call him. He is, after all, a politician. He responds to middle class folks who matter.

### **UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION NEWS**

#### **Washington Office for Advocacy Contact Information (please post)**

Rob Keithan – Director - [rkeithan@uua.org](mailto:rkeithan@uua.org)

Kat Liu - Assistant Director - [kliu@uua.org](mailto:kliu@uua.org)

Grace Garner - Legislative Assistant for Women's Issues and UU Women's Federation

Clara Barton Intern - [ggarner@uua.org](mailto:ggarner@uua.org)

Adam Gerhardstein - Legislative Assistant for International Issues –

[agerhardstein@uua.org](mailto:agerhardstein@uua.org)

Lisa Swanson - Legislative Assistant for Economic & Racial Justice –

[lswanson@uua.org](mailto:lswanson@uua.org)

Alex Winnett - Program Associate for Peacemaking - Mary Bonner Memorial Intern –

[awinnett@uua.org](mailto:awinnett@uua.org)

UUA Washington Office for Advocacy Email News and Updates

1320 18th Street NW, Suite 300B | Washington DC, 20036 | phone: 202.296.4672

email: [socialjustice@uua.org](mailto:socialjustice@uua.org) - website: [www.uua.org/socialjustice](http://www.uua.org/socialjustice) - fax: 202.296.4673

### **Job Opening: Program Coordinator for Multicultural Congregations**

The position of Program Coordinator for Multicultural Congregations in Identity-Based Ministries is open. The job description is posted on our website at [www.uua.org/aboutus/careeropportunities/index.html](http://www.uua.org/aboutus/careeropportunities/index.html). Send cover letter and résumé—indicating "Program Coordinator for Multicultural Ministries" in the subject line—via e-mail (preferably) to the Rev. Sofia Betancourt at [sbetancourt@uua.org](mailto:sbetancourt@uua.org), or to Human Resources, UUA, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, MA 02108 if you are interested or know of someone whom you think would be a good match.

- From the UUA Washington Office Advocacy News for December

### **Action Alert: Moving Towards a New Foreign Policy**

An Action Alert from the Washington Office for Advocacy regarding The New Diplomatic Offensive for Iraq Act (H. R. 3797). Read, discuss, set up a letter-writing table after services, write, advocate! **Alert attached.**

## **ST. LAWRENCE DISTRICT SOCIAL JUSTICE COUNCIL NEWS**

### **“Catalyst” Team in St. Lawrence District to Combat Racism**

Co-Chair Lynn Ashley, minister of the Barneveld congregation, and newly named co-chair of the Catalyst Team Jacqui Williams of the Saratoga congregation, have announced the naming of a task force responding to a 2006 resolution by the UUA General Assembly. The Metro New York Anti-Racism and Diversity (ARDC) team has agreed to be mentor to the group. Both groups and anyone interested are invited to the Allies for Racial Equity (ARE) Conference February 1-3 in Memphis, Tennessee. For information contact Rev. Wendy von Zirpola at [revwendyvon@yahoo.com](mailto:revwendyvon@yahoo.com) or go to the website [www.uuallies.org](http://www.uuallies.org).

### **Election 2008 Social Justice Council Workshop**

Social Justice Council Workshop, *Democracy as a Religious Principle: UU Values in the 2008 Election*, will be at the District Assembly, Binghamton/Owego, April 25-26, 2008. The program is:

- The “real rules,” what churches can and cannot do in the campaign (Robb Smith, Interfaith Impact of NYS Executive Director)
- Voter registration (Dick Dana, Albany UU Society)
- Moral dimensions of political issues (Rev. Sam Trumbore, Albany UU Church).

## **UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SERVICE COMMITTEE CORNER**

**Subscribe to UUSC eWire!** The UUSC eWire provides social justice advocates with E-mail updates, alerts, and activism opportunities. At present, there are two eWire lists, the UUSC's Human Rights Defenders list for action alerts on a variety of advocacy initiatives and the UUSC's Save Darfur list for action alerts related to the Sudan genocide. Sign up for either or both of these lists (and watch for new lists) at [www.uusc.org](http://www.uusc.org).



UUSC JustWorks camps are short-term projects that help volunteers examine and understand the causes and damaging effects of injustice. Participants work directly with people in the communities they serve, experiencing social justice struggles firsthand. human rights in the United States and around the world. **2008 JustWorks Camps:**

**New Orleans Alternative Spring Break Camp** (youth 14-18),  
March 15-21, 2008; New Orleans, LA; Fee \$400.

**Legislative Action Day** (youth up to 18)  
April 22, 2008; Boston, MA; Fee \$10.

**UUA General Assembly** (youth and young adults)  
One-day camp; June 28, 2008; Fort Lauderdale, FL; No Fee.

**Freedom Summer 2008: A Civil Rights Journey** (intergenerational 14+)  
July 12-19, 2008; Atlanta, GA; Birmingham, Selma, and Montgomery, AL; Fee: \$500

**Water Justice Camp** (ages 18-25)  
August, 2008; Los Angeles and Sacramento, CA; Fee: \$300

For more information and to request an application, please contact JustWorks staff by calling 800-388-3920 (Shayla Reid, ext. 227, Nguyen Weeks, ext. 201, and Kim McDonald, ext. 217) or e-mail [justworks@uusc.org](mailto:justworks@uusc.org). Also, visit [www.uusc.org](http://www.uusc.org) for updates, camp and application information (including scholarships), and video and news stories from last year's camps.

## NEW YORK STATE ISSUES

### Can Incrementalism Be the Path to Universal Health Care?

**Attached** to this newsletter is a very provocative essay by Mark Dunlea on strategies to achieve universal health care. Robb Smith ([robbsmith@nycap.rr.com](mailto:robbsmith@nycap.rr.com)), Executive Director of Interfaith Impact of New York State, introduces the essay: "Mark does a good job of arguing for single payer (see below), and in the long run, single payer is probably the only way we will attain sustainability and equity in universal health care, but we also need to emphasize that it is possible. NYS on its own is one of the largest economies in the world, and we can do it now if we can generate the political will." Contact: [Dunleamark@aol.com](mailto:Dunleamark@aol.com) or go to the website [www.hungeractionnys.org](http://www.hungeractionnys.org).

### **Increasing the Welfare Grant**

Hunger Action Network of NY (HANNYS) is making a serious attempt to ease the hunger of those who have to rely on the welfare system. HANNYS is spearheading a state wide initiative to increase the welfare grant. There has been no overall increase in the grant for 18 years in spite of the over 50% inflation since that time. Combined cash assistance for food stamps provide about 75% of the federal poverty level. The governor has expressed an interest in including a grant increase proposal in his budget proposal in mid January, but says he wants to hear from the public on the issue. To get poor people the help they need, please write to the governor encouraging him to include a welfare grant increase proposal in his 2008 budget message: Hon. Eliot Spitzer, Executive Chamber, State Capitol, Albany, NY 12224 or e-mail [www.NYGOV](http://www.NYGOV) – and go to “Contact the Governor.” **The Interfaith Impact of NYS position paper on welfare reform is attached to this newsletter.**

### **Empire State Pride Agenda: 2008**

“Our goals this year are to:

- Move the Assembly to pass a bill outlawing discrimination based upon gender identity and expression.
- Increase pressure on the Senate to vote on a marriage equality bill and a bill requiring schools to combat bias-based harassment.
- Continue winning state funding that supports critical LGBT health and human services being provided by local LGBT organizations across the state.
- Work in targeted State Senate districts to replace anti-LGBT senators with pro-LGBT senators in the November elections and protect assembly members who have supported our community.”

- Empire State Pride Agenda newsletter January 7, 2008

### **Reproductive Health and Privacy Protection Act**

This is Governor Spitzer’s RHPPA (S05829) act to guarantee Roe v. Wade principles as state law. It is being opposed by the NYS Catholic Conference (see [http://www.nyscatholicconference.org/pages/our\\_agenda/show\\_billDetails.asp?id+135](http://www.nyscatholicconference.org/pages/our_agenda/show_billDetails.asp?id+135)) For supporting arguments see <http://www.nyclu.org/rhappa> or Google “Reproductive Health and Privacy Protection Act.”

## **NATIONAL ISSUES**

### **Prevention through Affordable Access Act**

The cost of contraceptives sold at student health centers and some community clinics rose earlier this year due to a provision in the 2005 Deficit Reduction Act (DRA) that unintentionally cut off these health centers from receiving low-cost drugs. In many cases the cost has risen by 900%! This has forced many college women and low-income women to stop using contraceptives. The Prevention Through Affordable Access Act (H.R. 4054/S. 2347) would be a no-cost, technical fix that will restore the nominal prices to these clinics and ensure that college women and low-income women have access to affordable birth control. Do not let high prices stop women from accessing birth control. Contact your representative now and demand affordable access! Go to the website

below to send a letter to your Representative urging them to take action on this no-cost fix! ([http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/o/1272/campaign.jsp?campaign\\_KEY=22035](http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/o/1272/campaign.jsp?campaign_KEY=22035))  
- From the UUA Washington Office Advocacy News for December

**Evolution Weekend: February 8-10, 2008**

Evolution Weekend is an opportunity for serious discussion and reflection on the relationship between religion and science. One important goal is to elevate the quality of the discussion on this critical topic – to move beyond sound bites. A second critical goal is to demonstrate that religious people from many faiths and locations understand that evolution is sound science and poses no problems for their faith. Finally, The Clergy Letter has now been signed by more than 11,000 members of the Christian clergy in the United States. Evolution weekend makes it clear that those claiming that people must choose between religion and science are creating a false dichotomy. If your congregation would like to join this international event in 2008, please send a note to [mz@butler.edu](mailto:mz@butler.edu). For information on this effort go to [http://www.butler.edu/clergyproject/rel\\_evolution\\_weekend\\_2008.htm](http://www.butler.edu/clergyproject/rel_evolution_weekend_2008.htm).

**Paper Ballots and Vote Count Audits for 2008**

Rep. Rush Hold of New Jersey will introduce the “Confidence in Voting Act of 2008,” which would provide \$500 million to counties and other election jurisdictions to replace the controversial paperless electronic voting systems before the 2008 election. The bill envisions voters using paper ballots that are marked by hand, or ballots that are printed on Election Day after voters use a computer to make their choices. An electronic scanner, like a standardized test, would then tally the ballots. Watch for details.

**Clean Money Clean Elections**

“Public Financing of Elections Would Lead Us out of the Partisan Swamp” by Nick Nyhart, president and CEO of Public Campaign, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to reform that aims to dramatically reduce the role of big special interest money in American politics. To download the statement go to <http://www.alternet.org/module/printversion/73011>.

**Americans United: Stop Religious History Month**

House Resolution 888 designates the first week in May as "American Religious History Week." According to Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, this resolution contains numerous statements that are exaggerated, misleading, or that distort America’s history of religious liberty. **See attachment “Stop Unnecessary and Misleading House Resolution.”**

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**AGENDA FOR CHANGE MAILING LIST**

If you would like to be on the E-mail list for this Newsletter or if you change you address or if you have newsletter items, please contact Dick Gilbert at [Rsgilbert@uuma.org](mailto:Rsgilbert@uuma.org).

**SERVICES OF THE SOCIAL JUSTICE COUNCIL**

In addition to an annual social justice conference and the newsletter *Agenda for Change*, the Social Justice Council offers the services of Dick Gilbert to preach and/or lead social justice workshops. Contact [Rsgilbert@uuma.org](mailto:Rsgilbert@uuma.org) or 585-244-7403.

**JOIN INTERFAITH IMPACT NOW!**

Individual and Congregational Memberships Welcome

Interfaith Impact of New York State is a UUA-UUSC partner organization. The St. Lawrence District is an official member and UUs are active on the Board. Robb Smith of our Albany congregation is Executive Director - robb@interfaithimpactnys.org. We encourage individual Unitarian Universalists in New York State to join. We also encourage you to invite your congregation or social action group join as an organizational member. For your convenience a membership form is below.

(Note: year end contributions can be especially helpful to IINYS and your tax status. For details, see *Covenant for Justice* 2007 End-of-the-Year Update)

Congregation/organization donation (suggested): \$50 - \$100 - \$300  
Individual donation (suggested): \$10 - \$25 - \$50

Phone: (518) 463-5652  
E-mail: [interfaithimpactnys@verizon.net](mailto:interfaithimpactnys@verizon.net)

Background information on state issues at [www.interfaithimpactnys.org](http://www.interfaithimpactnys.org)

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

Please print or type:  
Name and Title:

\_\_\_\_\_

City, State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ FAX: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Congregation: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Affiliation:  Protestant  Unitarian Universalist  Reform Synagogue  Other

Membership Dues Enclosed:  
Congregation/organizations  \$50  \$200  \$300  Other (amount) \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to: Interfaith IMPACT of New York State  
and mail to: IINYS, 646 State Street, Albany, NY 12203

Your Assembly Member \_\_\_\_\_ Your State Senator \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your support