



**For Immediate Release**  
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## **New Census Data: Colorado Families Struggle to Make Ends Meet** ***Child Poverty Increases Sharply, Uninsured Rates Remain High***

Denver, CO—The U.S. Census Bureau released new data today showing that nearly a half million Coloradans, or 10.6 percent, struggle with poverty and that the state's child poverty rate has increased to 15.3 percent. Statewide data also showed that median household income declined slightly from the previous year, and that 16.6 percent of Coloradans are uninsured, which is higher than the national rate.

“The fact remains that far too many Colorado families are struggling to make ends meet on a daily basis,” said Kathy White, Project Coordinator of the Colorado Fiscal Policy Institute. “In the fifth year of an economic recovery, advances have been too slow and poverty levels remain too high.”

### **Health Insurance**

16.6 percent of Coloradans, or 772,000 people, did not have health insurance coverage in the 2004-2006 period, according to the data released today. Nationwide, the number of uninsured was 47 million (15.8 percent), up from 44.8 million in 2005. Colorado's uninsured rate remains higher than the U.S. rate.

### **Poverty**

Census Bureau data shows that over the 2005-2006 period, 10.6 of Coloradans were poor, which is a slight increase from 9.8 percent in the 2003-2004 period and 9.2 in the 2000-2001 period, just prior to and during the recession. Most alarming is the continued increase in the child poverty rate, which is 15.3 percent in 2006, up from 13.8 percent in 2005 and 12.2 percent in 2001.

The data also shows that 8.4 percent of Colorado families, or 100,852 families, live in poverty. This rate has remained steady from last year's 8.3 percent, but is still significantly higher than the pre-recession level of 6.8 percent in 2001.

### **Income**

In 2006, median household income in Colorado stood at \$52,015. This was a nearly \$300 decrease from the 2005 level, and more than \$2,000 below the 2001 level (adjusted). Colorado's median household income continued to fluctuate in recent years, but has not recovered to pre-recession levels.

Nationally, real median earnings for both men and women declined for the third year in a row, even though median household income rose slightly. This shows that people are generally working harder, longer hours to make ends meet, and not necessarily making more money.

This new data comes at a crucial time for state and federal policymakers. Congress is considering key legislation that will have a tremendous impact on poor and working poor families. After the August recess, federal lawmakers are expected to act on both the Farm Bill legislation, in which the Food Stamp Program is included, as well as the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP).

Additionally, Colorado lawmakers have the opportunity this legislative session to reinstate the State Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), which is widely regarded as one of the most effective ways to fight poverty by empowering working families.

“Working people are making tough decisions everyday, whether to pay for health insurance or rent, provide childcare or put food on the table.” said Jessie Ulibarri, Director of the Campaign for Economic Justice with Colorado Progressive Coalition. “Our lawmakers need to make the right decision by permanently enacting the state Earned Income Tax Credit.”

Many of these policy priorities are the focus of this year's Paycheck Away Project, a tour of Colorado communities sponsored by nine different advocacy groups and focused on gathering community-driven solutions from local forums. The project centers on finding new ways to address and resolve chronic issues like hunger, homelessness, health care costs, and poverty.

“Mile High United Way, along with many other advocacy organizations in Colorado, is working hard to help families gain financial stability and self sufficiency,” said Richard Audsley, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of Mile High United Way. “But we'll be fighting a losing battle if the federal government cuts programs like Food Stamps and SCHIP that provide a basic safety net for people who are struggling.”

“This new data shows that poverty, low wages, and the lack of health insurance still affect far too many Colorado families.” said Whitney Hanson, Lead Organizer of the Colorado Chapter of 9to5, National Association of Working Women. “Additionally, this data doesn't account for the working families who balance life on the edge — making choices about which medical bill to pay and how much food they can afford each week; literally living only one paycheck away from poverty.”

“Behind each number is a family in peril, struggling with poverty, hunger, and other disadvantages that most of us can't imagine,” said Tina Podolak, Executive Director of the Colorado Anti-Hunger Network. “The data released today reinforces the importance of our elected leaders improving the Food Stamp Program, The Emergency Food Assistance Program and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program, and taking action on other tools we can use to fight poverty and hunger.”

Data comes from two survey instruments used by the Census Bureau, the Community Population Survey (CPS) and the American Community Survey (ACS). More information can be found at [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov).

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The **Colorado Fiscal Policy Institute** (COFPI) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research and public education project of the Colorado Center on Law and Policy dedicated to providing reliable fiscal analysis that enhances public participation in

policy debates, highlights the importance of tax and budget decisions on low-income and other vulnerable populations, and creates a more transparent and accountable government. [www.cclponline.org](http://www.cclponline.org)

The **Colorado Anti-Hunger Network** is a group of private, public and non-profit agencies coming together to learn about available food resources, share information, improve availability and delivery services and resources benefiting Coloradans who are experiencing hunger and food insecurity.

**Mile High United Way** maximizes the power of collective generosity. We focus on three related initiatives: School Readiness, Youth Success and Adult Self Sufficiency. Our mission is achieved when young children from low-income families are prepared to succeed when they begin school, at-risk youth graduate from high school and individuals and families achieve financial stability and independence. We can do more together. To learn more visit <http://www.unitedwaydenver.org/>.

**9to5, National Association of Working Women** is a national, grassroots membership organization that strengthens women's ability to work for economic justice.

**Colorado Progressive Coalition** is a nonpartisan grassroots organization with over 5,500 members across Colorado and is nationally known for its work to advance civil rights, economic justice, and a democracy that works for everyone, not just the wealthy or the well-connected.