

A Banner Day for TennCare Enrollees

by Chris Lugo, Tennessee Independent Media Center

TennCare enrollees dropped banners that read: 323,000 AT RISK and ONE DEATH EVERY 20 HOURS during Governor Bredeesen's annual address to the State Legislature on January 31. Enrollees

are upset over Governor Bredeesen's plan to drop 323,000 Tennesseans from TennCare, the state's public health insurance program.

"Private health insurance companies have been allowed to externalize the costs of sick people onto the state of Tennessee for 15 years," says Lucy Parsons, a TennCare enrollee who participated in the banner drop. "The governor is not standing up for socialized medicine. We either need insurance for all Tennesseans or we need the private health insurance companies to cover those of us who are 'uninsurable.'"

Jen Cartwright, who was involved in the planning of the evening's action, says that a lot of people are frustrated from using the official channels such as writing letters and visiting their legislators. "TennCare

enrollees decided that it was time in this forum when we are talking about the state of the State to make our concerns heard. Many enrollees have cancer or AIDS and they will not be able to find insurance

anywhere else. It is important that people who are affected have an opportunity to make their voices heard."

Gordon Bonnyman, TennCare advocate with the Tennessee Justice Center, says, "I am very concerned about the people that are going to be hurt by these cuts. We are talking about 323,000 Tennesseans losing their health care coverage altogether. We are also talking about an additional tens of thousands who will not be able to get the services they need. That is a very serious matter. I don't think the governor's ideas are realistic. He

said everyone is going to come through this okay, but we know this is not true, and medical experts agree with us."

(continued on page 4)



Photo by Al Levenson

Letter from the Center

by Lynne Robinson, Board Chair

The Center recently co-sponsored Where Do We Go from Here? for local community activists—a theme that appropriately connects the NPJC's successes and plans I'd like to share with you.

We have been building and growing as a center. Some of this growth has initiated from within. Via Matt Leber's leadership, NPJC applied for number of grants, and we obtained our first-ever large grant. Soon after, the board approved Matt as full-time coordinator—hours he has long since dedicated and for which he will now be justly compensated. We are also underway on a technology overhaul, which will allow us to more efficiently carry out our community work. The Center has also initiated a process aimed at dismantling racism. All of us, from staff to member organizations to community members, are looking at our experiences and the frameworks we work from to better understand racism, privilege, and internalized oppression, intent on building a more inclusive, relevant

NPJC. This deliberation is taking us outside the Center as well, as members of a newly formed Listening Project will go to meet people in their time and spaces and...listen.

This project is one of several building blocks in our ongoing endeavor to effect a culture of peace and justice. The Center, in collaboration with the unwavering energy of individuals and causes, continues the fight for right to health care. Alliances have been forged, new friendships formed, and even differences weathered. None of this mobilizing will be undone regardless of the political outcome of TennCare. Such community gusto is also evident at the NPJC Leadership Institute, where Jen Cartwright has assembled a team to transform passion to power, will to skills.

Where do we go to from here? I invite you to drop by the Center to take part in our issue forums or workshops. Add your presence to the March 19 peace rally. Witness NPJC develop a three-year strategic plan. Please do stay tuned and let us stay our course together.

NASHVILLE PEACE AND JUSTICE CENTER

A community-based, multi-issue center for the Middle Tennessee region seeking to promote peacemaking, social justice and environmental issues in our society and the world.

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Radio Free Nashville
The Scarritt-Bennett Center
Tennessee Coalition to Abolish State Killing
Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition
United Nations Association
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War Resisters League

ALTERNATIVES

is the official bimonthly publication of the Nashville Peace & Justice Center

EDITORIAL COLLECTIVE

Ashley Crownover, Al Levenson, Gene Kelly, and Karl Meyer

SUBMISSIONS

We seek cartoons, articles, letters and photos related to peace and justice issues relevant to the Tennessee progressive community. We will try to respect the integrity of your submissions, but we reserve the right to edit for clarity, grammar, spelling and length. Objections? Write us a letter.

Fax: 615-320-8897 Phone: 615-321-9066
Email: ashleycrownover@yahoo.com

Calendar

March/ April 2005

March 1: Boycott Taco Bell: Forum and Protest, 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m., IBEW Hall, 2001 Elm Hill Pike. *More Info:* www.ciw-online.org, daynisecouch@hotmail.com or 615-292-3199.

March 1: Tennessee Coalition to Abolish State Killing International Death Penalty Abolition Day Write-a-Thon, 6-9 p.m. at Portland Brew Coffeehouse, 2605 12th Ave. S. in Nashville. Raise awareness, get sponsors, write letters, generate publicity. *More Info:* 615-473-2950 or www.tcask.org; 615-463-0070 or email letterwriting@tcask.org to register.

March 2: The Green Team, the environmental advocacy group of First Unitarian Universalist Church of Nashville, invites you to spend Wednesday evenings with us at 1808 Woodmont Blvd. From 7-8:30 p.m., Vanderbilt Divinity School student Lisa Dordal will preach her sermon "Poison or Birdsong," which considers what is often hiding in the electricity we use, the food we eat, the clothes we wear, our investment portfolios, etc. Along with some music and some readings, this will be an evening of mindfulness for the earth. *More Info:* 615-383-5760 or socialjustice@firstuunashville.org.

March 3: Tennessee ACLU Director Hedy Weinberg will give her impression of the two cases involving the Ten Commandments being heard in the U.S. Supreme Court today. Refreshments will be served at 6:45 p.m. The meeting takes place at the Cohn Senior Center, 4805 Park Ave. in Nashville, and is sponsored by Nashville Chapter Americans United for Separation of Church and State. *More Info:* www.nashville-au.org.

March 4-6: Interfaith Alliance 9th Annual National Leadership Gathering, Wyndham City Center, Washington, DC. *More Info:* jdavis@interfaithalliance.org.

March 5: WRFN Radio Free Nashville On-Air Training at NPJC* from 12-1 p.m. See page 7 for details.

March 8: Global Fund for Women Nite at First Unitarian Universalist Church of Nashville, 1808 Woodmont Blvd., 6:30-8:30 p.m. Enjoy live music and theatre, good company, good food and a silent auction. Held simultaneously with parties in every state of the Union, the event will help raise funds for the Global Fund for Women, a nonprofit grantmaking foundation that empowers women's groups throughout the world to work to gain freedom from poverty, violence and discrimination. Child care provided. Suggested donation is \$15. *More Info:* [Vivian Slade](http://www.vivian.slade.com), 615-227-2836, or visit www.globalfundforwomen.org.

March 8: Amnesty International (AI) Nashville Write-a-Thon for International Women's Day, 6-9 p.m. Support AI Campaign to stop violence against women. Write on behalf of women in Colombia, Mexico, Yemen, and Turkey. *More Info:* lynn-e@comcast.net (email for location).

March 9: The Green Team, the environmental advocacy group of First Unitarian Universalist Church of Nashville, invites you to consider some GREEN home improvements from 7-8:30 p.m. at 1808 Woodmont Blvd. Individually and as a community, there are things big and small that we can do to reduce our dependence on oil and our consumption of energy. Sean Siple's "home improvement" class will explore sealing up the house, using the sun and the trees, super insulations, support circles and homegrown credit unions to fund those fanciful dreams. *More Info:* 615-383-5760 or socialjustice@firstuunashville.org.

March 12: GI Hotline: GET TRAINED to support our troops at the Nashville Friends Meeting House, 26th Ave N and Torbett (just north of Charlotte), from 9 a.m.-6 p.m. Join the Nashville Friends Meeting (Quakers) and the Nashville Peace Coalition of the Nashville Peace and Justice Center in the first in a four-part training to create a team of counselors in Nashville to be a part of the national GI Rights Hotline. There is an optional \$10-\$30 contribution to the Quaker House (501c3) to assist with their work. Register by March 5. *More Info:* Email [Diana McKeever](mailto:Diana.McKeever@dcmckeever@yahoo.com) at dcmckeever@yahoo.com, call Christina or Pam at 615-341-0255, or visit <http://girights.objector.org>.

March 12: WRFN Radio Free Nashville Programmer's Meeting at NPJC* from 3-4 p.m. See page 7 for more info.

March 12: Third Annual "Women of Words" at Fisk University, the Appleton Room in Jubilee Hall, from 7-9 p.m. In honor of Women's History Month, Simply Sil (Ink Diva's Productions) will present a performance (including poetry, spoken words, gospel acts, singers, and liturgical dancers) to benefit the local YWCA women's shelter in the fight against domestic violence. Hosted in conjunction with the Fisk Race Relations Institute and the Nashville Peace and Justice

Center. Cost is \$7 in advance (tickets may be purchased from "Knock Out Wings" or "Earth Tones," both located on Jefferson Street) or \$10 at the door. *More Info:* [Contact Simply Sil at 615-828-1162](mailto:ContactSimplySil@aol.com) or foryomind@aol.com or contact [Matt Leber at matt@nashvillepeacejustice.org](mailto:MattLeber@matt@nashvillepeacejustice.org) or 615-321-9066.

March 19: Peace Rally to observe the second anniversary of the War in Iraq. *More Info:* 615-321-9066.

March 23: Immigrant & Refugee Legislative Reception from 5-7 p.m. at the Offices of Waller, Lansden, Dortch, & Davis, PLLC, 511 Union St., 27th Floor Conference Center in Nashville. Last year over 50 Tennessee legislators, the mayor of Nashville, numerous representatives of all branches of government and over 175 New American leaders from across Tennessee attended this historic occasion. This year promises to be bigger and better than ever. This event is free and open to anyone who supports the rights of immigrants and refugees. To register, visit www.tnimmigrant.org/TN_Coalition/RegistrationForm.htm or email Jami@tnimmigrant.org with your name, address, phone number, and number of attendees (and organization, if applicable). *More Info:* 615-846-6672 or www.tnimmigrant.org.

April 1-3: Radio Free Nashville Barn Raising. See page 7 for details. *More Info:* www.radiofreenashville.org or 615-293-3365.

April 8: Nashville SOA WATCH meeting at the Beisswenger home, 107 Colony Court in Nashville. Soup and potluck at 6 p.m., reports and planning at 6:30 p.m. We'll discuss last November's Fort Benning vigil and actions since; share resources, books, and videos (and perhaps view a video); and brainstorm on Nashville actions. *More Info:* [Don Beisswenger](mailto:Don.Beisswenger@att.net), 615-269-7980.

April 16: Belmont Family Literacy Day on the Belmont University campus from 1-4 p.m. Reading circles, books, games, and crafts for children in Grades PreK-6. This free event is hosted by the Belmont Volunteers for Literacy program, which also includes ongoing tutoring programs at Carter-Lawrence Elementary Magnet and Sevier Park Community Center as well as English tutoring for children and adults through the YMCA Hispanic Achievers Literacy Program. To volunteer transportation for families who need it or to donate door prizes or art supplies, contact [Nikki Troutman](mailto:Nikki.Troutman@pencilfd.org) of the PENCIL Foundation at 242-3167, ext. 231 or ntroutman@pencilfd.org.

April 19: Nashville Chapter Americans United for Separation of Church and State business meeting, 7-8:30 p.m. at NPJC*. *More Info:* 615-646-9946, 615-646-7976 or www.nashville-au.org.

April 23: Nashville Earth Day Festival 2005 at Centennial Park from 12-7 p.m. Rain or shine, come enjoy food, music and fun at this free event celebrating Mother Earth. *More Info:* www.nashville.gov.

Weekly Activism

Sundays: Food not Bombs from 1:30-3 p.m. at Legislative Plaza (between Capitol and Sheraton, at 6th and Union). *More Info:* ryan@monsterlabs.com or 615-293-0603.

Wednesdays: Peace Coalition from 6-7:30 p.m. at NPJC*. Join the two-year-old NPJC Peace Coalition as they plan protests and educational events.

Thursdays: Women in Black from 12-1 p.m. on Broadway between 12th and 11th. "Silently stand in black: to mourn, to remember, to be a presence for peace."

* NPJC offices and board room are located at 1016 18th Ave. S., Nashville, Tenn. 37212. Call 615-321-9066 for directions.

Spring 2005 Leadership Institute— A Dream Come True

by Jen Cartwright, NPJC Director of Education

For a long time, the Nashville Peace and Justice Center has dreamed of becoming a regional education center where activists can come for comprehensive training on the skills of community organizing, while building relationships across issue campaigns and across lines of race, class, and ethnicity. How thrilling it is to see this dream, and many long months of planning, come to fruition as thirty-six eager trainees pack our conference room every Thursday night for the Spring 2005 Leadership Institute.



Fred McClain, Christina Kretchik and Sonalini Sapra listen as trainer Francie Hunt discusses the fine points of strategic planning. Photos by Al Levenson.

They represent a wide range of issues: some are working on immigrants' rights, some on hunger and homelessness, others on local environmental justice, still others on health care, gay rights and the death penalty. They also represent a variety of important local institutions, such as the Martha O'Brien Center, Fisk Race Relations Institute, Iraqi House and Hispanic Achievers Program. Some are paid staff of non-profit organizations, looking for ways to incorporate community organizing skills into the work they do. Others are new to the world of social justice, seeking ways to get more involved

and put their newly learned skills to work. Many more are grassroots leaders, organizing their friends and neighbors around issues of local concern while balancing the demands of full-time work and family. All of them are inspirations.

Each week, a different pair of trainers facilitates this group through a workshop focused on a specific skill such as strategic planning, public speaking, working with the media, lobbying elected officials and organizing public events. Equipped with these skills, a small group of dedicated people truly can change the world.

I've been happily overwhelmed by the

number of people wanting to participate in the Leadership Institute: we received over sixty application forms for this Spring 2005 round of workshops! While we didn't have room for everybody this time around, we've heard the message loud and clear that there is a big demand for this vital kind of training. We are planning to make the Leadership Institute a regular event, with another nine weeks of workshops this summer and again in the fall. Please contact me with questions or to learn more: 321-9066 or jen@nashvillepeacejustice.org.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

(editors of other publications, that is!)

From the Dec 1, 2004 issue of Education Week

"Reader Helps Clarify Constitutional Issue"

A statement attributed to the Philadelphia schools' chief executive officer, Paul G. Vallas, in your article "Philadelphia Schools Reach Out to Faith Groups" (Nov. 10, 2004) ranks among the most irresponsible I've seen from a public school administrator, and is just plain wrong. He reportedly said, "The Constitution allows freedom of religion, not freedom from religion."

As a former school principal, I know that many parents, including some who are devoutly religious, want freedom from public school religion for their children, whether during the day or after school. As a former graduate student who did a master's thesis examining constitutionally proper and improper religious practices in public schools, I have no doubt that the intent of the First Amendment is to provide both freedom of religion for those who wish to practice it and freedom from religion for those who do not. Both freedoms carry equal weight, constitutionally, and leave matters of religion to individual conscience, not government.

The Founding Fathers who drafted the U.S. Constitution were aware of and respected America's religious heritage. Mostly religious men themselves, they also were acutely aware that most Colonial governments either had an established religion or had imposed majority religious practices on their citizens. Some of these governments had harassed and persecuted religious minorities and those who did not profess a belief in God. With this knowledge, the constitution's framers deliberately developed a secular governing document that made no reference to God and included the stipulation that "no religious test shall ever be required" to serve in government.

To further protect minorities from religious imposition by the majority, the Constitution was amended before ratification to assure that government cannot favor religious belief over nonbelief, or vice versa. The First Amendment prohibits "establishment of religion" while assuring "free exercise thereof."

Since public schools are agencies of government, these constitutional principles and limitations also apply to public schools.

Gene Bryant
Nashville

Howard Meek
Nashville

Letter to the Editor, The Tennessean, submitted January 12, 2005

A letter writer claims *The Tennessean* (and liberals) need to "come back to reality": that we cannot AFFORD TennCare OR national health care because both come out of the pockets of taxpayers.

He ignores the reality that such taxes (which mostly come from the wealthy) are a moral issue. It is ironic that the party of moral values, and "life," avoids the moral responsibility of being our brothers' keeper. It is strange irony that Tennessee, the center of the Bible Belt, has aligned itself with such immoral policies.

Health care will be the issue which exposes the hypocrisy that Republicans are the party of moral values. Like the Pharisees of old, they are aligned with the rich and powerful.

The greatest sin of this generation is its failure to acknowledge that government has a legitimate role in Christian compassion and justice. A role it seeks to avoid by use of its faith-based initiatives.

TennCare Banner Drop *(continued from page 1)*

Mike Kernell, who represents the Memphis district in the House and serves as chair of the Government Operations Committee, agrees. “What business person would give up a 300 percent return on their money?” he adds. “For every dollar we spend on state government, we could have gotten three dollars from the federal government. Essentially, the governor is trying to cut the state government by transferring costs onto local governments which is going to bankrupt them. I think these cuts are wrong, and we shouldn’t do it.”

Referring to the demonstrators, Bonnyman says, “I think it is unfortunate that people feel like in order to get heard by their legislative representatives this is the only way they feel they can be heard. It is clear that the public is not being heard, so many people are going to be hurt. There is a huge gulf between the most vulnerable Tennesseans and the governor. We have to bridge that gap in some way if people are going to be protected.”

HOW I CAME TO BE A BANNER DROPPER

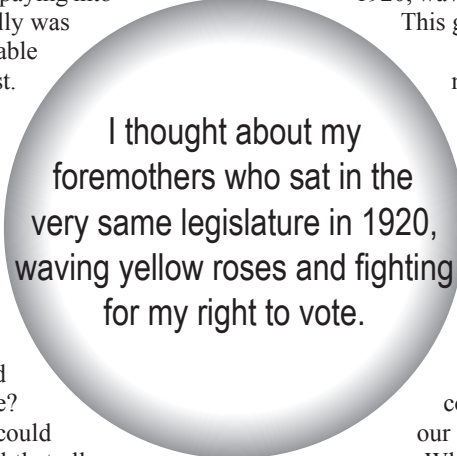
by Lucy Parsons

I am a TennCare enrollee because I am “uninsurable.” I had tried to get on TennCare as a low-income person, but the rolls had already been closed. The point is, I could have been paying into TennCare for a full ten years before I actually was enrolled. I believe that TennCare should be available to all Tennessee residents, at a sliding scale cost. The Feds put in two dollars to our one, and this makes it unwise to ignore the opportunity we have here to insure every Tennessean.

As the TennCare debate heated up and cuts became inevitable, more people revealed to me that they were TennCare enrollees. I also met many who have done important work for our community who were now hanging on by a thread. Many of these people were risking relapses in their condition to get out in the cold and speak out. What is the value of a human life? Being one of the few people on TennCare who could survive a few days in jail, if need be, I decided that all the lives at stake were worth some discomfort and humiliation and hunger on my part.

Fearful about my dog, my rent, my health, I went to the legislature with the support and help of many friends, enrollees, and allies. Everyone agreed to help me in some way—whether it was through paying a bill for me or dog sitting or putting up bail money. Jen Cartwright helped me to think about what I might need, and helped me to ask for it. Megan Macaraeg made sure there was bail in case any of us went to jail and

needed out for health reasons—a high probability in our group. I thought about my foremothers who sat in this very same legislature in 1920, waving yellow roses and fighting for my right to vote. This gave me courage.



I thought about my foremothers who sat in the very same legislature in 1920, waving yellow roses and fighting for my right to vote.

The hardest part about the banner drop was all the nervousness of the people around me. I had dressed prepared to be thrown to the ground and put in a cold room somewhere, so I was sweltering and felt as if I was about to pass out. My fellow banner dropper showed up and was calm and ready. This helped a lot.

Everyone in the news wanted to interview me afterwards, and this was the most rewarding part. I had the opportunity to begin to change the terms of the debate—from one of pleading for crumbs to demanding accountability from the companies that have made so much money off of our sweat.

When asked who I represented, I had to say that although I have not been able to get the input from the 323,000 who are about to lose their benefits, that I hope my status as an enrollee will allow me to speak for all:

We are not to be thrown away due to lack of profitability. Many of us are women and men who have not counted the millions of hours of free work that we have done for society—so why are you counting our every breath, and how much it might cost you?

The Ten Commandments: Basis for Law or Religion?

by Charles Sumner
(President, Nashville Chapter)
Americans United for Separation
of Church and State

Even though the Ten Commandments are basic to Judaism and also to Christianity, both Jewish and Christian groups and individuals are among those who do not believe that they should be posted by government in public buildings. The two cases being heard by the United States Supreme Court in early March, *McCreary County v. American Civil Liberties Union of Kentucky*, and *Van Orden v. Perry* in Texas, are examples. The American Jewish Committee supports the ACLU in the former, and the National Council of Jewish Women has an Amicus brief in the latter. In addition, a brief filed in the Texas case on behalf of Hindus, Buddhists and Jains says that while they regard the Ten Commandments with utmost respect, an overtly religious monument is a blow to pluralism.

“The display of religious symbols, including the Ten Commandments, on public property, violates the constitutional principle of separation of church

and state, and sends the message to non-adherents that they are outsiders in their own communities,” says Jeffrey Sinensky, AJC’s general counsel. “Such displays are especially inappropriate in situations where people of all faiths and of no faith convene daily to seek justice.”

The AJC brief was filed with a coalition of Christian, Jewish and interfaith organizations. “When government attempts to rationalize its display of sacred texts by claiming secular purposes and secular effects, the inevitable tendency is to distort and desacralize the sacred text,” the brief states.

It is estimated that 30 of Tennessee’s 95 counties are posting the Ten Commandments. There are also other cases in various stages of litigation across the nation. In Kentucky, the Commandments were first posted alone, but after litigation was begun other items were added to the display in hopes of avoiding a decision against them.

(continued on next page)

NPJC and Fisk Race Relations Institute Collaborate for the First Time

The Nashville Peace and Justice Center and the Fisk Race Relations Institute collaborated for the first time with the “Where Do We Go From Here?” event in February. We brought together a diversity of community members from different organizations and ethnic communities to network and share ideas of how to move forward as a united community for social justice. The keynote speaker, Ms. Naomi Tutu, emphasized the need for organizers and activists of privilege to do the dirty work of behind-the-scenes organizing and to support the voice and actions of those most directly affected by injustice—for example, for people with homes to support the activism of the Nashville Homeless Power Project or for white people to listen when people of color share concern of racism and injustice that result in the school system, prison system, or even within the activist community. Over a dozen organizations were present. Co-organizer Melissa DaSilva of the Race Relations Institute consolidated the work of the 60 plus individuals who showed up:



Keynote speaker Naomi Tutu.
Photo by Al Levenson.

On a grey, rainy, Sunday afternoon, a varied group of Nashvillians asked, “Where do we go from here?” They had gathered to discuss the question of our future, the rights of our community members to food, housing, etc., and to explore avenues for working together to make a better world. Out of the dialogues between six groups of 8-12 persons came the following responses, “We need to...”:

Do: Take action! Educate, mobilize, communicate, organize progressive voting, and raise awareness of history. Address the fear and disillusionment that keep people in their comfort bubbles, pay attention, connect, address accountability, listen, broaden connection, seek and speak the truth, have self-awareness, question, investigate our exclusionary behaviors, learn to use the media to develop a voice. Pick core value issues around which to get consensus.

Be: Humble; listening more and talking less; connecting with people in our community—including those with whom we disagree; striving for unity, togetherness; building a sense of hope; expanding our own perspective in coalition building; educating ourselves.

Create: Build coalitions with all members of our community, with diversity; educational material for our schools and churches.

Over 500 words diluted to less than 125 after the subtraction of common words, phrases and sentiments; not exactly a quantitative result, but certainly one that promotes hope that we might someday soon be able to dialogue through our differences for a common good.



Participants discuss the future of social justice at February’s “Where Do We Go From Here?” event. Photo by Al Levenson.

Ten Commandments

(continued from page 4)

The Sixth Circuit ruled against the display; a previous high court decision had already stated that the Commandments are religious and therefore may not be posted in public schools.

In Texas, a lower court had decided that the six-foot granite monument on the grounds of the Austin State Capitol had been in place so long (since 1961) without being controversial that it did not violate the Constitution. The Amicus brief filed by Americans United together with People for the American Way and NCJW argues that just because a display is longstanding does not validate it. It also calls to the court’s attention the death threats, vandalism and harassment against people who have brought church-state litigation.

The public is invited to hear Tennessee ACLU Director Hedy Weinberg speak on these issues Thursday, March 3. This is the very day on which the United States Supreme Court is holding the hearings involving the Ten Commandments, so it will be very timely. Hedy will give her impression of the arguments presented, which often gives clues as to what the decision will be. See the calendar on page 2 for more information.

Americans United Seeks Interns

Would you like to spend a summer in Washington, DC, working for a cause you believe in? Americans United for Separation of Church and State is now accepting applications for summer interns to work at our national office. We are looking for people to fill the following positions: field intern, grassroots outreach intern, legal intern and web intern. Financial assistance is available. For more information about the positions and for access to our online application form, please visit www.au.org/about_internships.

—Rena Levin
Americans United for Separation of Church and State

TennCare is a Civil Rights Issue

by Sekou Franklin


Fannie Lou Hamer, a poor Mississippi sharecropper, joined the civil rights movement in the early 1960s. Although she was in her forties at the time, she joined the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)—known as the “shock troops” of the movement—because of their fearless struggle for voting rights, desegregation, and economic justice. During the 1960s Ms. Hamer was the ethical compass of the civil rights movement, symbolizing its idealism, humanity, and deep commitment to fighting for the downtrodden. In 1964, she attracted worldwide attention after her nationally televised testimony at the Democratic National Convention, where she talked about the horrors of southern racial terrorism and the humiliation of the Jim Crow code.

I thought about Ms. Hamer shortly after Governor Phil Bredesen’s “State of the State” speech on January 31, in which he attempted to justify his drastic cuts to TennCare, the state’s expanded Medicaid program. If Ms. Hamer were alive today and in earshot of the governor’s speech, she would have been saddened by his remarks and his unwillingness to acknowledge the adverse impact that his TennCare reforms will have on the state’s most vulnerable populations.

The governor’s apocalyptic approach to TennCare solvency will have devastating, life-altering consequences for many Tennesseans. About 1.3 million people or 25% of the state’s population are on TennCare, 323,000 of whom will be without health care should the governor’s reforms receive federal approval from the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services. The governor’s reforms will further reduce medical coverage for 396,000 adults who are able to stay in the TennCare program. By Summer 2006, these enrollees will be restricted to yearly caps on doctor visits, labs/x-rays, inpatient care, and outpatient services, as well as a monthly cap (four per month) on prescription drugs.

Bredesen’s reform package will bring additional harm to children who survive the initial round of cuts. The Children’s Defense Fund, the nation’s most influential child advocacy group, recently stated that the reforms will reduce medical coverage for 600,000 low-income children who remain on TennCare. This is because the reform package gives state bureaucrats and health management organizations (HMOs) the leeway to determine the cheapest service for treating medical conditions for both children and adults, due to a controversial provision in the proposal called, “medical necessity.” Tennessee’s “medical

necessity” definition, in contrast to other states and private insurers that use this provision, is the most restrictive in the country. Bredesen’s reforms will also disqualify many working poor families that seek to enroll their children into TennCare after April 30. Many of these children will suffer because they come from families that make too much money to qualify for (federal) Medicaid—this could apply to a mother who has two children, but makes \$7.50 per hour—but are too poor to pay for private insurance.



TennCare is not just a battle over balanced budgets, but it is a litmus test that will determine the governor’s commitment to civil rights.

To make matters worse, rural and urban public hospitals and community health clinics—health-care facilities that serve working-poor populations—will experience budget shortfalls under the governor’s plan. These hospitals depend upon federal matching dollars distributed under TennCare, which will be cut under the governor’s current proposal. They will also experience an influx of patients who no longer have TennCare and who have reduced medical services, and as a result, will be forced to obtain treatment in emergency rooms and trauma centers. This will place insurmountable costs on public health facilities that have to treat more patients with less money, and it may put an extra burden on taxpayers to pay for poorly funded hospitals and clinics.

Bredesen’s reforms will further have a disproportionate impact on Blacks as well, 43% of whom (400,000 out of 900,000 Blacks) are on TennCare. This concern has not been lost among some civil rights groups. Theodore Shaw (the president and director-counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference’s state chapter, and some clergy affiliated with Nashville’s Interdenominational Ministerial Fellowship (IMF) have all expressed anxieties about the adverse affects that the TennCare reforms will have on Blacks.

In recent years, the civil rights community has given an increasing amount of attention

to health care. Health-care advocates often point to the prophetic words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who said, “Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane.” Hence, opponents to the governor’s reform package contend that TennCare is not just a battle over balanced budgets, but it is a litmus test that will determine the governor’s commitment to civil rights. The governor, however, has failed this test because he refuses to see the connection between the fight to save TennCare and the humanism of the civil rights movement. Indeed, within a three-week period, the governor spoke at an event celebrating the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and at a health policy conference in North Carolina, where he likened Medicaid [read TennCare] to “socialism.” This narrative points to a sort of thought-policing that parallels a similar strategy used by Dixiecrats in the 1950s and 1960s in order to scare Americans into opposing the 1964 Civil Rights Act and Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society programs.

Ultimately, the governor may have his way in the battle over TennCare. He has the state legislature on his side and he has silenced opponents within his own party. Yet this short-term victory may be met with long-term suffering, particularly for those who have to bear the brunt of the TennCare reforms. If this is the case, as I believe it will be, the governor’s reform package will reflect poorly on his reputation and it will leave a permanent stain on his legacy. To avoid this imprimatur, the governor (and his supporters) may look to Ms. Hamer’s life and vision of an egalitarian society for a bit of guidance. Ms. Hamer was no stranger to the debate over affordable health care. As a young woman, she was sterilized during a routine medical operation and was unable to bear children. She also suffered a premature death at the age of 59, resulting from a combination of breast cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and lingering injuries from a brutal beating by segregationists in a Mississippi jail. Ms. Hamer’s life could have been extended, if not but for a few years, if Mississippi had a TennCare-like system or a health-care safety net. Thus, she understood that affordable health care made available to everyone was an instrumental component of the civil rights struggle. This is a lesson that a governor who had more humility, and more importantly, an egalitarian spirit, would pay much closer attention to.

Dr. Sekou M. Franklin is an assistant professor in the Department of Political Science at Middle Tennessee State University. He can be reached at 615-904-8232 or franklin@mtsu.edu.

CALL TO ACTION!

MOUNTAIN JUSTICE SUMMER

By Casper Nichols

One of the greatest environmental and human rights catastrophes in recent American history is underway just west of Nashville. In the coalfields of Appalachia and the Cumberland Mountains, entire communities are being driven off their land by flooding, landslides, and blasting resulting from mountain top removal coal mining.

Mountain top removal (MTR), a new form of strip mining in which mountaintops are literally blasted apart to get at the coal seams underneath, is now threatening over 100,000 acres in Tennessee. In the coal industry's pursuit of quick profits and cheap electricity, jobs are being replaced with machines and mountains and streams are being destroyed forever.

This summer, we declare Mountain Justice Summer and say no to the destruction of mountain communities, and no to the annihilation of our beautiful mountains. But we also say yes: yes to empowered mountain communities with sustainable jobs, yes to healthy forests and streams, and yes to green energy. We will use a variety of tactics—from letter writing to nonviolent civil disobedience



at mines and offices—to make our voices heard.

This summer, join your voice with ours to put an end to mountain top removal and all forms of steep-slope strip mining in our mountains. There are many ways you can help:

EDUCATE AND ORGANIZE.

If we are going to put an end to the heinous practice, we must be knowledgeable, so learn more and tell your friends! Organize a benefit!

Organize your friends to oppose MTR!

HELP PLAN A PROTEST THIS SUMMER.

There will be at least four days of action in Nashville alone, so let's get ready for some fun!

CONTACT GOVERNOR BREDESEN and tell him that we don't want Rocky Top to be topless!

Governor Phil Bredesen
Tennessee State Capital
Nashville, TN 37243-0001
Phone: (615) 741-2001
Fax: (615) 532-9711
Email: phil.bredesen@state.tn.us

MAKE A TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATION to Mountain Justice Summer. Send to:

Mountain Justice Summer
312 S 11th St.
Nashville, TN 37206

Questions? Comments? Want to get involved? Send us a message at mjsnashville@hushmail.com and visit www.mountainjusticesummer.org.

Radio Free Nashville Signs On April 3

By Ginny Welsch

Radio Free Nashville (RFN) will be signing on the air April 3, the final event following a three-day barn raising April 1-3. This is a key time for RFN, and we need everyone to get involved now and help get us up and running. Without the support of the community RFN will die. Please come and help us in the last stretch...and beyond!

MEETINGS: Meetings will be held at 3 p.m. in the main conference room of the Nashville Peace & Justice Center, 1016 18th Avenue South.

PROGRAMMER'S MEETING Saturday, March 12

All programmers expecting to go on the air at sign-on should plan on attending. In addition to posting the final broadcast schedule, programmer's agreements will be given out, and all in-house programmer's rules and regulations will be discussed. This is the last formal meeting of programmers before sign-on.

TRAININGS: FCC and on-air trainings are held at 12 noon in the main conference room of the Nashville Peace & Justice Center, 1016 18th Avenue

South. Trainings are limited to 30 people. Those interested should contact blurken@hotmail.com to register.

FCC TRAINING Saturday February 26

FCC training involves going over all federal broadcast rules and regulations. There are general rules that apply to all broadcasters, as well as specific rules that relate to nonprofit broadcasters, and low-power FM broadcasters. All programmers are REQUIRED to complete FCC training prior to going on the air.

ON-AIR TRAINING Saturday March 5

This is a master class that helps potential programmers understand exactly what goes into the production of a radio broadcast, from pre-preparation through the actual air shift. Participants have an opportunity to see and work with broadcast equipment during the class. After completing the class, participants can sign up for practice time on the equipment, in a mock studio setup. At practice sessions, a trainer works with the programmer one on one.

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Capitol, Nashville TN 37243-0001
(615) 741-2001; phil.
bredesen@state.tn.us

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8 a.m. costs 29 cents)

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461 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.,
Washington, DC 20510
(202) 224-3344; senator@frist.
senate.gov

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310 War Memorial Building,
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bryson@legislature.state.tn.us

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haynes@legislature.state.tn.us

U.S. Representative Jim Cooper
1536 Longworth House Office Bldg.,
Washington, DC 20515
(202) 225-4311; visit [http://cooper.
house.gov](http://cooper.house.gov) to send an email

**Tennessee Senator
Douglas Henry**
11 Legislative Plaza
Nashville, TN 37243-0021
(615) 741-3291; sen.douglas.
henry@legislature.state.tn.us

Radio Free Nashville

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HOW TO INTERVIEW TRAINING: The session will be held at 3 p.m. on Saturday, March 5, at the Nashville Peace & Justice Center, 1016 18th Avenue South. Training is limited to 30 people. Those interested should contact blurken@hotmail.com to register. During the training, participants will learn

- How to find the interviews that you'll do better than anybody else can.
- The four basic emotions your interview should cause in your listener.
- What to say and do when you're booking a guest.
- Doing your homework: prepping for your guest.
- How to find the three main questions you should ask your guest.
- How to determine what MUST go into the final edit, and what's "who-gas."
- The most important part of asking questions: listening to the answers.
- When to shut up.
- The final question.
- How to pre-promote your interviews with clips and one-liners

For more information about WRFN and other scheduled trainings, visit www.radiofreenashville.org.