

Campaigning for Successful Transit: Transit Advocacy

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Executive Director, PICO Louisiana

2011 Smart Growth Summit

PICO (People Improving Community Through Organizing) Louisiana

- PICO Louisiana's mission is to provide families and religious congregations in Louisiana with a voice in the decisions that shape their lives and communities.
- Established in 1988, PICO Louisiana is the largest statewide grassroots organizing effort in Louisiana. It represents more than 100 faith communities in New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and 12 other towns and cities.
- The four regional faith-based community organizations that make up PICO Louisiana include: (MICAH Project) New Orleans and Jefferson Parish; Working Interfaith Network (WIN)-Baton Rouge; Congregations Organizing People for Equality (COPE) Lafayette;(FUEL) Ministries-Pointe Coupee Parish.
- PICO Louisiana is part of the PICO National Network founded in 1972 that represents more than one million families in 18 states, 150 cities and towns across America, Central America and Africa.

PICO Louisiana

- PICO Louisiana's path to building a more just world involves teaching people of faith how to build and exercise their own power to address the root causes of the problems they face.
- At the center of PICO' Louisiana's model of faith-based community organizing is a belief in the potential for transformation – of people, institutions, and our larger culture. This belief stems directly from our rootedness in faith communities, and radiates throughout the organization, influencing the way we relates to public officials, to community members, and to one another.

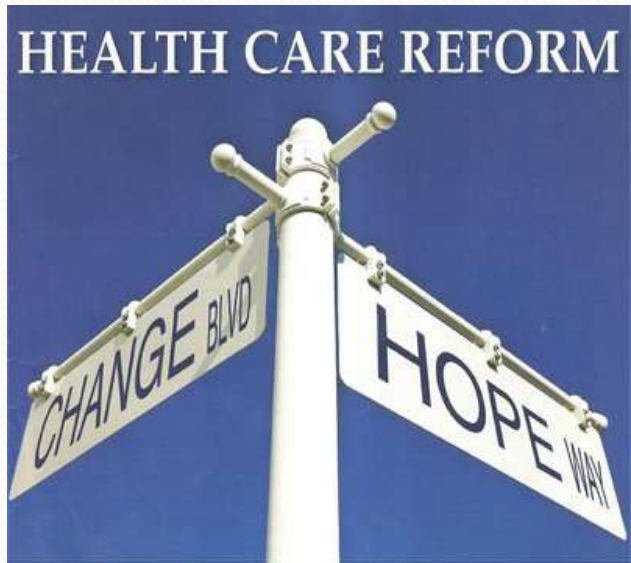


PICO Louisiana Campaigns

- *As part of an overall effort to reverse growing economic and racial inequality and create pathways of opportunity in Louisiana we are focusing on these key issue campaigns:*
- **Bring Health Reform Home**
- **Lifelines to Healing**
- **Education Reform**

Transportation equity is a critical component of the success of all of our work!

PICO Louisiana Campaigns



- **BRING HEALTH REFORM HOME:**

A statewide and national campaign to build public support for the Affordable Care Act (ACA). It includes organizing efforts using the tools and resources of the ACA to transform how health care is delivered. On the one-year anniversary of the ACA, PICO Louisiana organizing agencies held anniversary events: public actions, press conferences, prayer vigils, research meetings with elected and appointed officials and healthcare officials. This work is ongoing throughout the state.

PICO Louisiana Campaigns

- **LIFELINES TO HEALING:**
- A comprehensive effort to create positive opportunities for urban youth, reduce youth violence and incarceration.



Micah and WIN are leading this campaign which includes implementing Operation Ceasefire, a U.S. Justice Department best practice in youth violence reduction. This approach features emphasis on changing criminal justice policies to promote re-entry and creating job opportunities for people with multiple barriers to employment.

PICO Louisiana Campaigns

- **EDUCATION REFORM:**

MICAH, WIN, FUEL and COPE are leading multi-year campaigns to create better performing schools with real opportunities for children from low-income families to learn, grow and thrive. We have a strong interest, and a proven record, in building the capacity of parent and community leaders to participate fully in the education policy debates in their local community and statewide.



Our Work

PICO Louisiana



Transportation is...



“...essential for creating true communities of opportunity, with broad-reaching impact on the structure of metropolitan communities, job creation, energy-efficiency, housing stock, and economic opportunity. This is especially true in a time of economic austerity.” - PolicyLink

Transportation=Opportunity

“Investments in public transit, in particular, do far more than just create construction and technical jobs in the short-term. They forge stronger, more competitive communities linked to regional economic centers, helping low-income communities access the jobs and services they need to succeed.” - PolicyLink



Our Transportation Challenge

The Baton Rouge/New Orleans Super Region



The Baton Rouge/New Orleans Super Region...Challenges

- According to a 2011 report by the Brookings Institution, the New Orleans and Baton Rouge metropolitan areas comprise forty-four percent (44%) of the state's population, forty-six percent (46%) of state jobs, and forty-seven percent (47%) of the economic output (gross domestic product, 2009).
- Only an average of 50 percent of households in greater Baton Rouge and New Orleans live near a bus or rail transit stop, compared to a national average of 65 percent of households.
- The poverty rate in Louisiana is 19.6 percent. In the United States, the poverty rate is 12.4 percent.
- The poverty rate in metro or urban Louisiana is 18.1 percent. Rural poverty is always more severe than urban poverty. The poverty rate in non-metro or rural Louisiana is 24.2 percent.

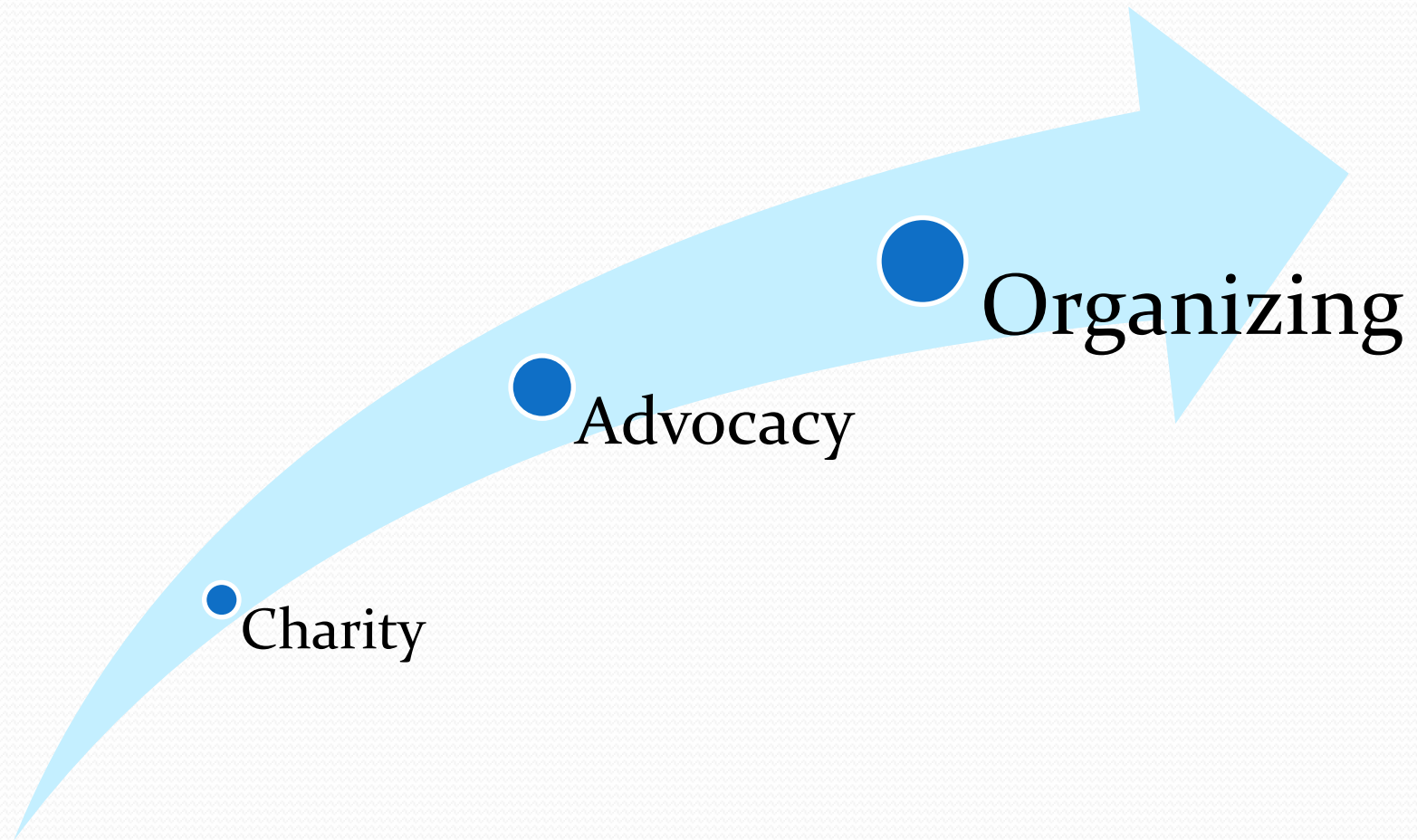
Source: *CPEX CONNECT Policy Briefs 2011* Source: *USDA, Economic Research Service*

How Do We Get Up To Speed?



1. Through civic engagement work
2. Through democratizing the process
3. Through concerted efforts to bring the voice of residents to policy-making tables
4. Through innovative approaches
5. Through multi-sector collaboration and teamwork
6. Through transparent processes
7. Through listening to young people, people of color, rural residents, low-income residents, the disabled community
8. Through public/private partnerships
9. Through the ballot box
10. Through learning from other communities and regions around the country

A Paradigm Shift



An Organizing Model

- Identify and organize large numbers of faith leaders who can provide a moral frame for issue campaigns and lead their congregations in civic engagement activities. These clergy will become a “prophetic community” that help their own congregations and people of faith in their communities to make sense of the messages they are hearing about the transportation and other issues that effect their lives



An Organizing Model



- Conduct leadership training programs that equip clergy, lay leaders and community residents with the capacity to apply a *values frame* to the issues;
- Build strong coalitions and establish a broad following;
- Sustain long-term campaigns to bring about systematic change;
- Wield influence to bring resources and political attention to their communities;
- Create common ground with public officials, create dialogue and foster a culture of accountability and respect.

An Organizing Model

- Build face-to-face civic engagement opportunities that develop leaders and deploy sophisticated data tools and analysis to identify and activate potential religious voters.



An Organizing Model

- Fortify clergy tables with faith-based organizing skills that allow them to build legislative campaigns focused around the economic equity issues related to transportation (i.e. affordable housing, jobs, violent crime reduction, health care access).



An Organizing Model

- Develop and disseminate carefully researched and tested messages that can speak to different faith traditions about the issues. We will reach out to religious voters and educate and engage them in an ongoing conversation about transportation, affordable housing, economic development, health care, and civic involvement.



An Organizing Model



- Fortify clergy tables with faith-based organizing tools that will allow them to build legislative campaigns focused around the economic equity issues related to transportation (i.e. affordable housing, jobs, violent crime reduction, health care access).
- Launch GOTV campaigns that educate voters on legislative activity at the local, state and federal levels.
- Our GOTV work focuses on organizing voters to “vote their faith values.”

Final Thoughts...

What Makes Sense

- Planning and policy making strategies that are centered on inclusion and create pathways for the voice of low-income, disabled, urban and rural residents
- Positioning transportation as an “opportunity driver”
- Careful attention to intended and un-intended outcomes of our transportation planning work
- Smart growth that builds infrastructure that provides opportunity into the future
- Transportation planning and policy that can layer in housing needs, demographic trends, environmental concerns, public health issues, education concerns

Thank You!

“Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work.” - Thomas Alva Edison

“To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.” - Ecclesiastes 3:1

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