
Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: August 20, 2014

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On the 50th anniversary of the War on Poverty, leaders and stakeholders from throughout SoCal gather today in L.A. to push for collaborative solutions

Los Angeles – Regional leaders and many of the top names in education, business and government from throughout Southern California are gathering here today to discuss tangible steps forward in the ongoing War on Poverty.

Fifty years after Congress passed the Economic Opportunity Act, poverty remains a national, regional and local crisis. Today in Southern California, more than 3 million people live in poverty, including one in every four children.

Today's summit, at the California Science Center, is hosted by the Southern California Association of Governments and the Southern California Leadership Council. The objective is to raise awareness, develop a broad coalition of stakeholders to help find solutions, identify specific actions needed to move people out of poverty into jobs, and come up with specific ways for attendees to get involved.

Connie Rice, Co-Founder and Co-Director of the Advancement Project, and former Gov. Gray Davis are among the speakers.

"We simply can't sit back and wait for the problem to fix itself," said Gov. Davis, Co-Chairman of the Leadership Council. "We need to find actionable ways to create more jobs."

Carl Morehouse, SCAG President and a Ventura Councilmember, said the summit will allow stakeholders in the areas of education, business, government and the nonprofit sector the opportunity to find common ground in the War on Poverty.

"Job creation has been and remains our biggest weapon when it comes to defeating poverty at the local and regional level," Morehouse said. "But that doesn't simply happen. It takes a serious commitment to workforce development and training at all levels. We need to think strategically. We need to think big."

The summit begins with registration at 8:30 a.m. and will include workshops and panels on the relationship of poverty and workforce development, identifying and maximizing the region's growth industries, best approaches for moving people from poverty to prosperity.

Updated research shows we're losing ground on that last point. According to a panel of economists convened by SCAG last year, the number of people living below poverty in the six-county region grew from less than 1.9 million in 1990 to 3.2 million in 2012. Among children, rates of poverty range from 17.7 percent in Ventura County to 32.8 percent in Imperial County.

Nationwide, 15 percent of people live below the poverty line, but according to the President's Council of Economic Advisors, true "market poverty" – reflecting what the poverty rate would be without any tax credits or other benefits – has actually risen from 27 percent to 28.7 percent over the past half century.

"Time has shown that we can't simply throw money at the problem," said Hasan Ikhata, SCAG's Executive Director. "We need to come up with real solutions that allow people to move from dependency to self-sufficiency, and that starts with jobs."

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About SCAG

SCAG is the nation's largest metropolitan planning organization, representing six counties, 191 cities and more than 18 million residents. SCAG undertakes a variety of planning and policy initiatives to plan for a livable and sustainable Southern California now and in the future. For more information about SCAG's regional efforts, please visit www.scag.ca.gov.

About SCLC

SCLC was founded in 2005 as a non-partisan, nonprofit, business-led public policy partnership. The Leadership Council unites businesses and community leaders from throughout the region into one effective leadership organization whose membership includes three former California Governors and two dozen Presidents and CEOs of top Southern California companies. For more information about SCLC, please visit www.scallc.org

Background

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FIFTY YEARS INTO THE WAR ON POVERTY

- On August 20, 1964, Congress passed the **Economic Opportunity Act**, officially launching the War on Poverty. First declared by President Lyndon Johnson during his State of the Union address earlier that year, the War on Poverty led to such ongoing initiatives as the Community Action Program, Job Corps, Head Start, Volunteers in Service to America and TRIO.
- Although government subsidy programs have lifted millions of families over the poverty line during the past 50 years, we have not done a good job of moving people from dependency to self-sufficiency. Factoring out those safety nets, the true “market poverty” rate today is actually higher today (28.7 percent) than it was in 1967 (27 percent).¹
- The past 25 years have been particularly difficult. In the six-county SCAG region, the number of people living below the poverty line grew from 1.89 million in 1990 to 3.2 million in 2012. Today, one in four children in the SCAG region live in poverty.
- Academic attainment has a direct correlation to job growth and employment opportunities. Here, too, the SCAG region has struggled:²

	Median Household Income	Bachelor's Degree or Higher
Northern California	\$76,906	43.2%
Southern California	\$56,717	28.9%

	Adults 25+ w/High School Education or Less	Poverty Rate	% of Children In Poverty
Imperial County	58.9%	23.2%	32.8%
San Bernardino County	47.9%	20.4%	28.3%
Los Angeles County	43.4%	19.1%	27.2%
Riverside County	45.6%	17.8%	24.9%
Orange County	33.9% ³	12.9%	17.9%
Ventura County	35.5%	11.5%	17.7%

¹ “The War on Poverty 50 Years Later: A Progress Report,” The Council of Economic Advisers, January 2014

² SCAG Economists

- In simplest terms, we can't simply throw money at the problem and expect it to go away. As the Council of Economic Advisers Report states: "Sustainable improvements are only possible if we create jobs and speed the economic recovery in the short run, raise economic growth in the long run, and work to ensure that the benefits of a growing economy reach all Americans."
- Meeting today in Los Angeles, the **Southern California Association of Governments** and the **Southern California Leadership Council** are bringing together stakeholders from business, education and public policy to help find solutions, identify specific actions needed to move people out of poverty into jobs, and come up with specific ways for attendees to get involved.
- In preparation for today's summit, SCAG has conducted a series of community forums in each of the six counties, collecting invaluable input from nearly 200 stakeholders from business, the nonprofit community, education and local government. Those meetings underscored both the unique challenges each community faces and the common ground that exists, specifically in the areas of workforce development and job creation.