

NEW WAY FORWARD –JUNE 10 FORUMS

ORGANIZE A FORUM OR TEACH-IN **CONVERSATIONS ABOUT THE ECONOMY**

During the week of June 8, 2009 and beyond, organizations around the country are organizing “Town Hall” meetings and “Teach-Ins” to educate the community. Local activists with “A New Way Forward” are talking with their neighbors about the economy and solutions to the banking crisis.

WHY A TOWN HALL MEETING OR TEACH-IN?

Teach-In, Forum, Assembly, Town Hall meeting –whatever we call it –let’s get people together to learn, talk and take action. This is an important time to engage about the rapidly changing economy. It’s also a key moment to press our leaders to go further to break up the “too big to fail” banks.

The bailouts of Wall Street corporations has touched a popular nerve –and people are eager to learn more about the causes of the economic crisis and how to advance a program to help our communities.

The objectives of a local program could include:

- Deepen public understanding of the causes of the economic crisis (deregulation, speculation, extreme inequality)
- Put the U.S. financial crisis and solutions in a global context
- Counter the myths that the crisis was caused by government pressure on banks to lend in low income communities (Stop blaming the Community Reinvestment Act, Fannie Mae/Freddie Mac)
- Engage grassroots leaders, members and the public in the process of re-envisioning how the economy should be organized.
- Mobilize support for the “unfinished agenda” to Congress. Some components include: nationalize and decentralize large Wall Street banks, provide financial aid to cities and states, rein in corporate excess, regulate the casino aspects of the financial markets, assist households facing foreclosure, and require that Wall Street speculators pay to clean up the mess they created.
- Hold Congressional members accountable for implementing the “unfinished agenda” to address the economic crisis.
- Local media coverage.

Establishing Goals of Your Local Program

Accountability Session? Members of Congress, including newly elected members, need to hear from us. This is a key time to hold an accountability meeting with them and ask them directly to support our agenda.

Town Hall Meeting? This is a strategic time to enlist state and local elected officials to press for changes at the federal level. If your local mayor or city council is willing to convene and offer space, the event might have a “town meeting” quality.

Education Forum and Action Teach-In? The primary purpose might be to engage people –with more speakers and even break-out workshops.

SAMPLE PROGRAM

What follows are some elements of a local Forum, Town Hall meeting or Teach-In, depending on your goals and whether elected officials will attend.

Welcome by Organizers

An Economic Overview –by a speaker who can explain in accessible terms the domestic and international causes of the economic crisis including: the roots of the housing bubble, speculation, and underlying wage and wealth inequalities that contributed to economic instability.

Subprime Crisis. A speaker on the Subprime Mortgage Crisis that can explain, ideally from a local perspective, the story of predatory lending, foreclosures, personal impacts. They need to debunk the myths about the Community Reinvestment Act and reckless borrowers.

Local Human Impact: How is this touching the lives of people in your community? Find a speaker from the local government, labor or human services community that can dramatically explain the impact of foreclosure, job cuts, human services cuts, etc. Could include speakers that have experience foreclosure, job loss, personal stories.

Transforming the Economy. Identify a speaker who can re-envision an economy that works for everyone, not just the wealthy –and address the question of what should be done with the “too big to fail” banking sector. The economic and ecological unsustainability of our current system requires fundamental change, not a cosmetic change.

Action Speaker: A speaker that can review state and federal actions –and is in touch with state and national coalitions working to respond.

FINDING SPEAKERS AND RESOURCES

Economic Overview Speakers: There are several organizations that might be able to identify economists in your region that are good speakers about the global and U.S. dimensions of the economic crisis. Contact:

- [Center for Popular Economics](#) Contact: Emily Kawano 413-545-0743 Email: ekawano@populareconomics.org
- [Dollars and Sense Magazine](#) Contact: Linda Pinkow 617-447-2177, ext. 204 Email linda@dollarsandsense.org

Speakers on the Subprime Mortgage Crisis. Find a local organization that has been working with first time homebuyers and victims of foreclosure who tell the local story. National resource organizations include the [National Community Reinvestment Coalition](#) (www.ncrc.org)

Speakers on Local Human Impact. Identify a local organization or speaker who has worked on issues of poverty and inequality. Several national resource organizations for finding a local speaker include: [Coalition for Human Needs](#) (<http://www.chn.org>) and [Children’s Defense Fund](#) (www.childrensdefense.org)

Speakers on the Action Program

A local activist or a member of your organizing committee could review some of the actions and pass out postcards, fact sheets or whatever timely action makes most sense for your region/district.

SOME LINKS TO EDUCATION RESOURCES

Get the most pertinent or popular articles and information materials here:
<http://www.anewwayforward.org/more.php>

And the latest links can be found on our blog: <http://www.anewwayforward.org/blog>

Need Help?

See the resources of the “Forum Organizing Project” at www.forumorganizing.org. These are for communities and congregations interested in setting up community film and lecture series, but there are some useful tips, including a free downloadable “Forum Organizing Guide.” <http://www.forumorganizing.org/organize-forum>

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