

North Texas



JOBS WITH JUSTICE

North Texas Jobs with Justice's Workers' Rights Board

Investigation of the Current Unemployment Crisis and Summary
of Hearings Held 2009-2011

Who are we?

- Jobs with Justice (JwJ)
 - Jobs With Justice is a nationwide network of coalitions of labor, community, faith, student, and constituency organizations. Jobs With Justice coalitions are dedicated to protecting the rights of working people and supporting community struggles to build a more just society. For more information see: www.labordallas.org
- Workers' Rights Board (WRB)
 - WRB brings together community leaders from all sectors including state representatives, religious leaders, organizers and activists, educators and academics, lawyers, journalists, and many others who understand workers' rights. For more information see: <http://wrbdallas.blogspot.com/>

What has the Workers' Rights Board done so far?

- Held hearings where workers could present their struggles
- Spoken out on behalf of workers
 - By meeting with management and public officials
 - To the media (press conferences)
 - In acts of solidarity (rallies, etc.)
 - And now in presentations of findings to community groups



What is going on?

-The Overall Economic Situation

There is no such thing as a jobless economic recovery

- The official unemployment rate is 9.1% nationally
 - This number does not account for all the people who are long-term unemployed, cannot find a job, and are no longer tracked statistically (“99ers”).
 - Nor does the official number account for all the long-term unemployed who have given up looking for a job.
- The un-official unemployment rate which includes all workers who want a job, but cannot find one, is set at about 23%.

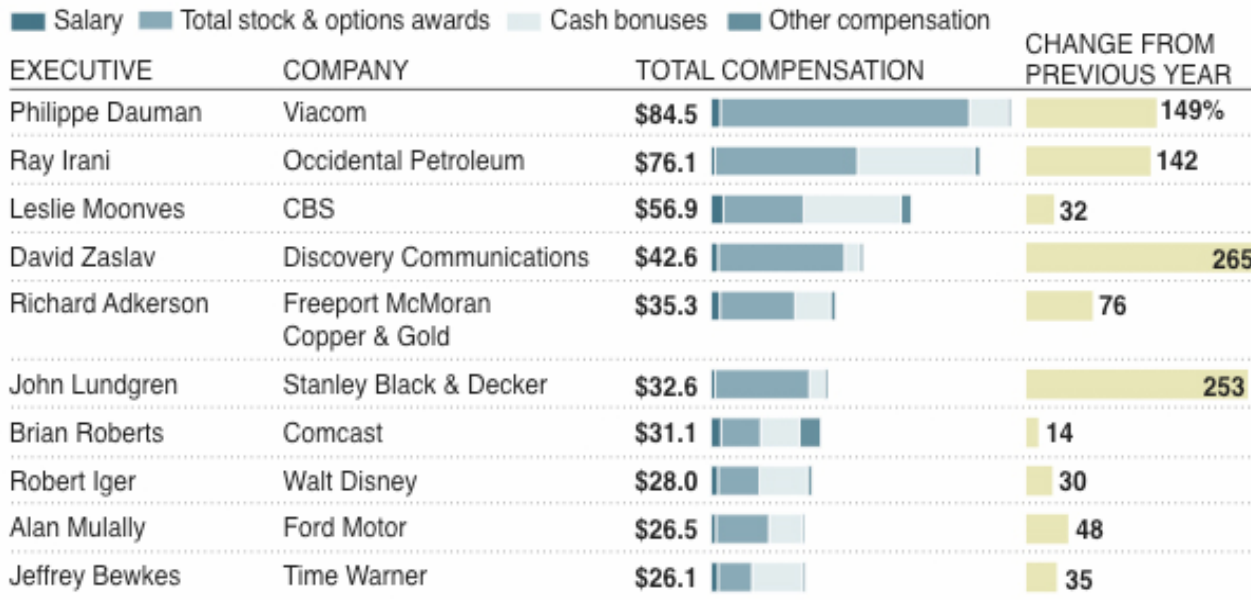
(Source http://www.shadowstats.com/alternate_data/unemployment-charts)

-The rich are getting richer.

Leaders of the CEO pay pack

The typical pay package for a CEO of a company in the Standard & Poor's 500 was \$9 million in 2010, 24 percent higher than a year earlier. The highest-paid CEOs had compensation about three times that or more.

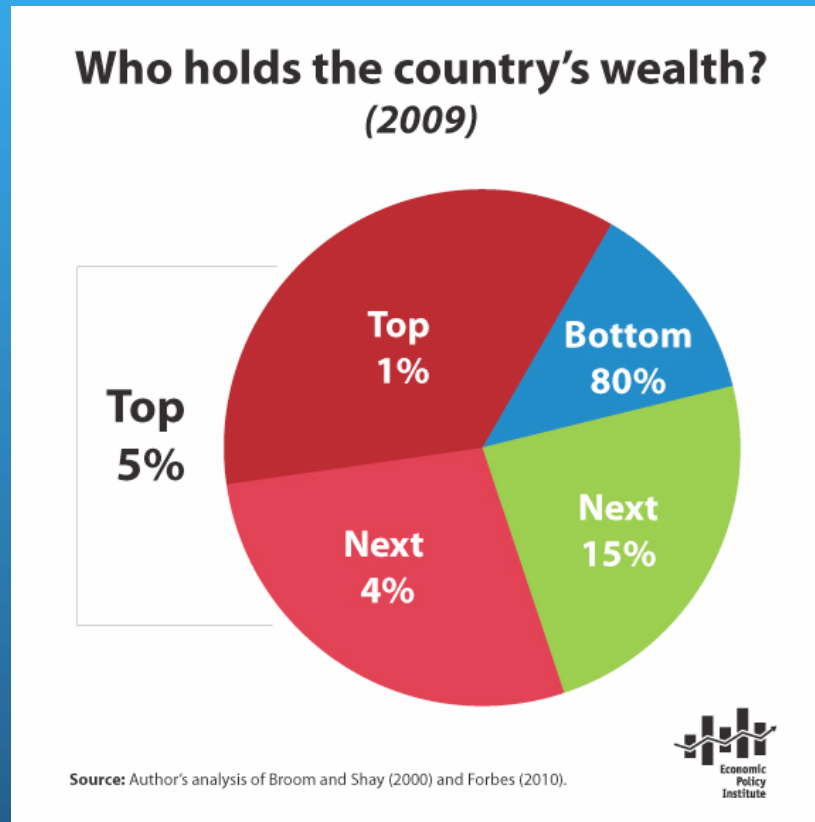
Top-paid executives in 2010, by total compensation, in millions



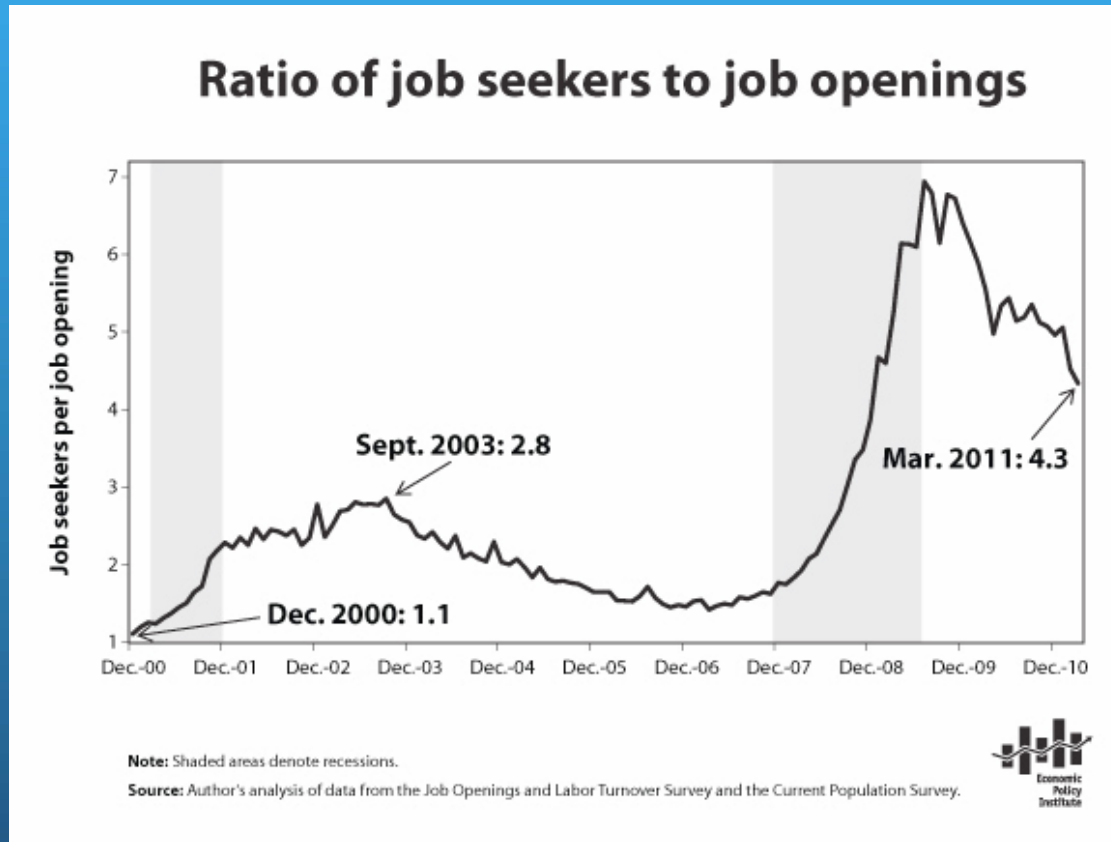
SOURCE: Equilar

AP

-The wealth gap between rich and poor is at record levels.



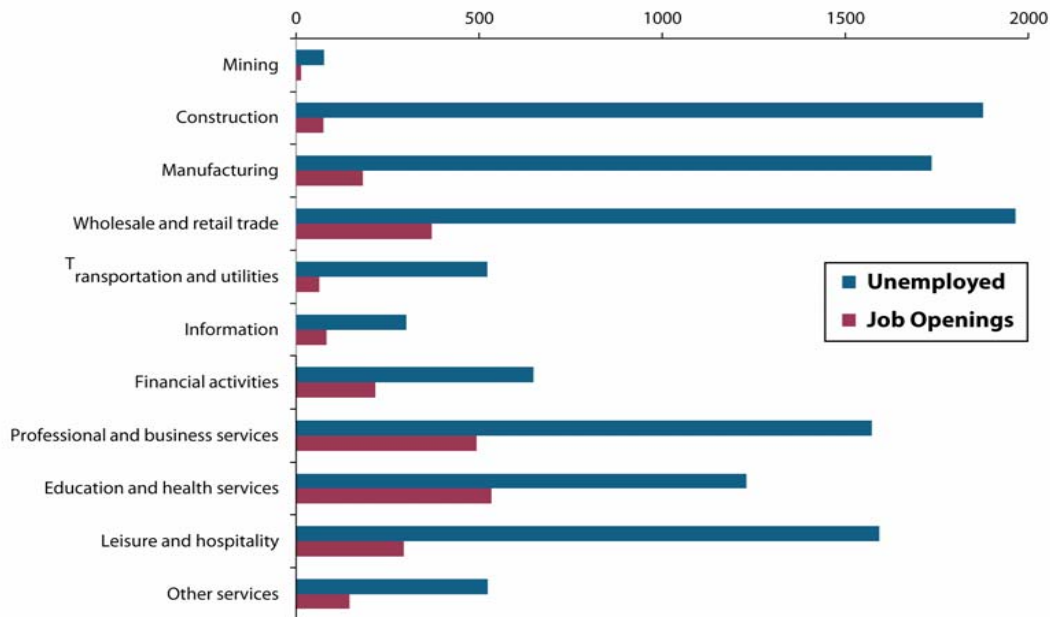
-There are not enough jobs.



-All sectors of the economy are affected.

Number of unemployed far outstrip number of available jobs across the board

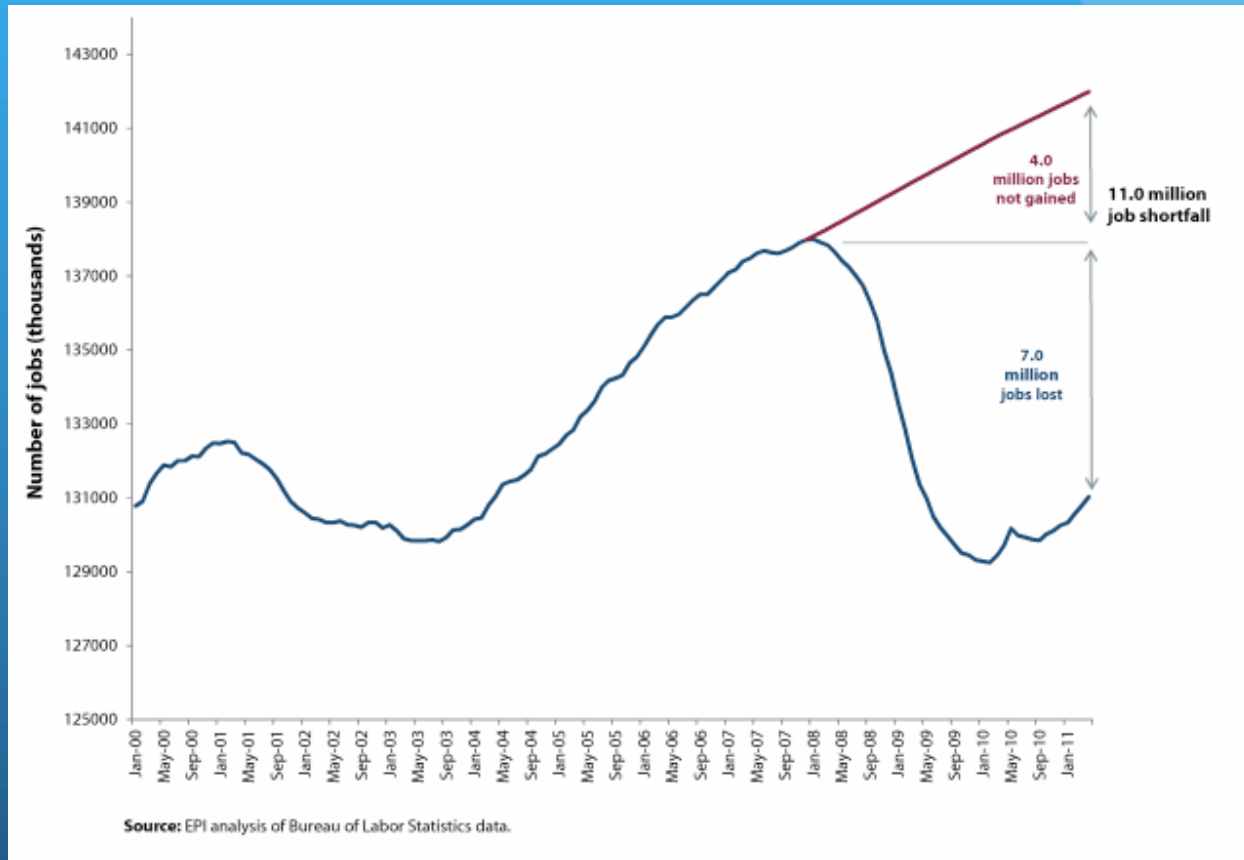
Unemployed and job openings, by industry (in thousands)



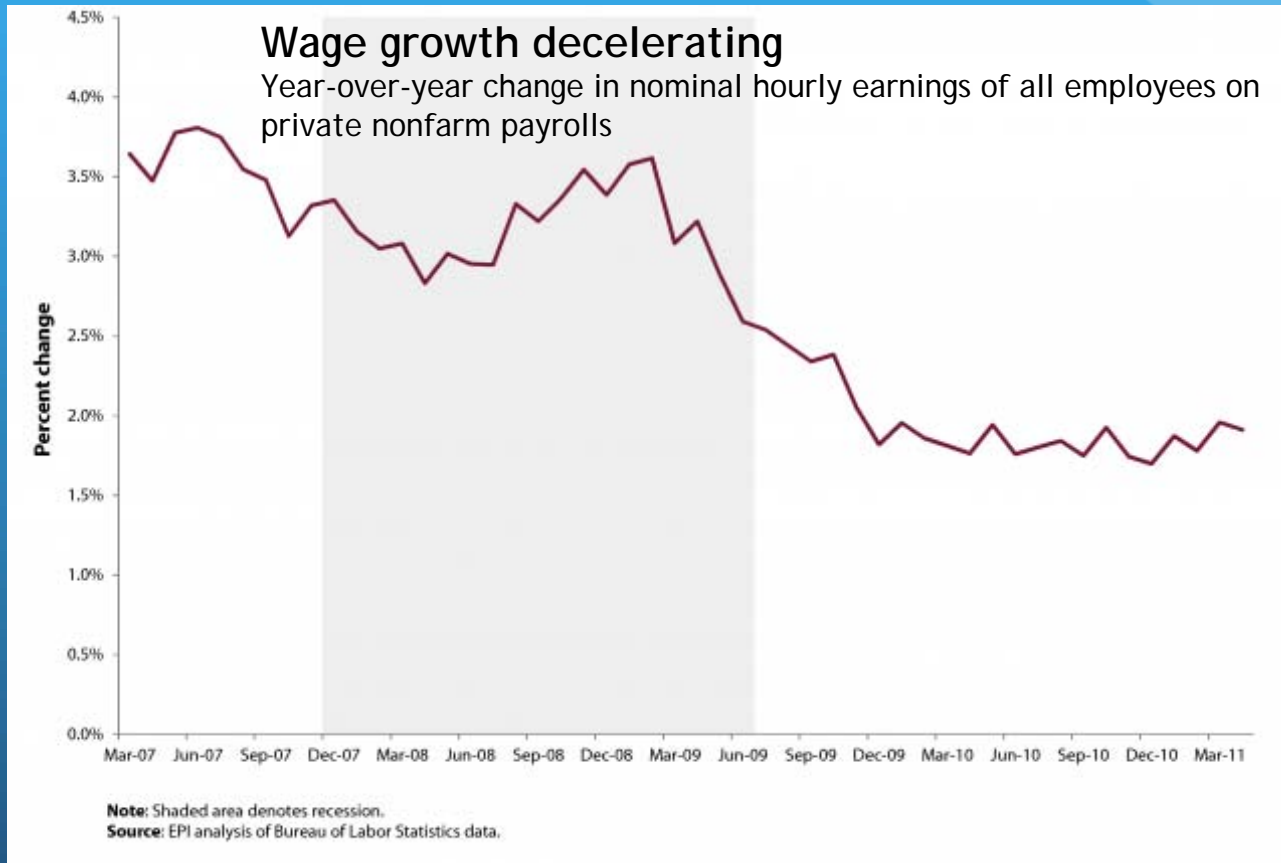
Note: Due to the fact that the data are not seasonally adjusted, these are 12-month averages, Sept. 2009- Aug. 2010.

Source: Author's analysis of data from the Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey and the Current Population Survey.

-The jobs shortfall is staggering



-Recession is being used to suppress all workers' wages.



What is going on in Dallas?

-Findings of the Workers' Rights Board

The Dallas Situation

- Myths about who the unemployed are:
 - There aren't many unemployed.
 - Approximately 18,000 people received at least one unemployment check from Jan 1-April 30, 2011
 - Unemployment does not affect people with college degrees.
 - 49.8% have some college or a degree

The Dallas Situation

- Myths about who the unemployed are:
 - The unemployed are just out of school or retirement age.
 - But the numbers show:
25% under 30 years
45% 30-50 years
27% 51-64 years
1.6% Over 65
 - 72% of unemployed in their prime wage-earning years (30 - 64 years of age)

The Dallas Situation

- Who is affected by unemployment?

Broken down by race:

41% - African-American (21% of Dallas population)

31% - white (39.5% - of Dallas population)

23% - Hispanic (34.44% Dallas population)

* Just number of unemployment claims (does not include people who have exhausted unemployment or take into account the wages of each group)

The Dallas Situation

- Official unemployment: 8.1% in Dallas (250,151 people) as of April 2011
- Many Dallas teachers, social workers, healthcare workers, nursing home workers, postal workers and more are losing their jobs
- Weak protection of worker rights
- Unsafe and inhumane working conditions

What we are learning from the hearings:

- Weak protection of workers' rights and unemployment does not just affect individuals, but all of us.
 - Unemployment is a growing struggle for many here in Dallas
 - Unemployment and underemployment drive down wages for all working persons and makes working conditions leaner and meaner for everyone
 - Entire communities are strained when families cannot make ends meet

What we are learning from the hearings:

- Responsible businesses are undercut when employers cut costs by not creating safe working environments and abusing their workers
- Tax payers pick up the cost of work place injuries and disability benefits when workers without workers' compensation or health benefits are injured on unsafe jobsites
- Worker abuse and persistent unemployment has the potential to give the city of Dallas, the state of Texas, and their inhabitants a bad name

What we are learning from the hearings:

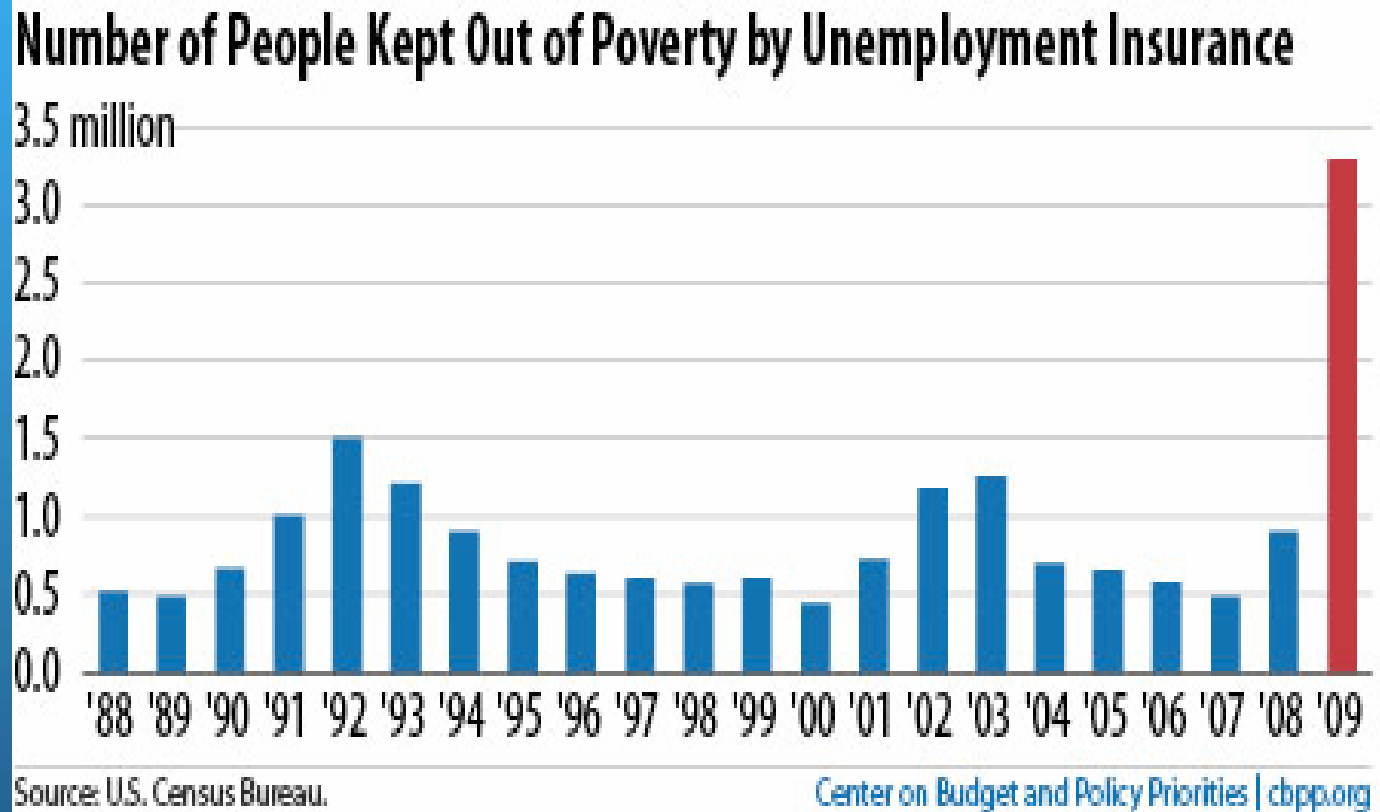
- Dangerous working conditions and unemployment are not 'natural' crisis - someone is benefiting
 - Companies get more jobs and make a larger profit by cutting corners on safety and basic resources like water provision
 - Those who are making the most money in this economy continue to benefit when the government does not take action to curb unemployment
- Things can and are being done to protect workers and reduce unemployment
 - Example: WRB teamed up with Workers' Defense Project to introduce new legislation into the Texas House and Senate to protect the rights of construction workers
 - The government could invest in job creation programs
 - Texas could use existing resources to avoid increasing unemployment
 - The WRB is standing in solidarity with the workers and speaking out to their employers

What we are learning from the hearings:

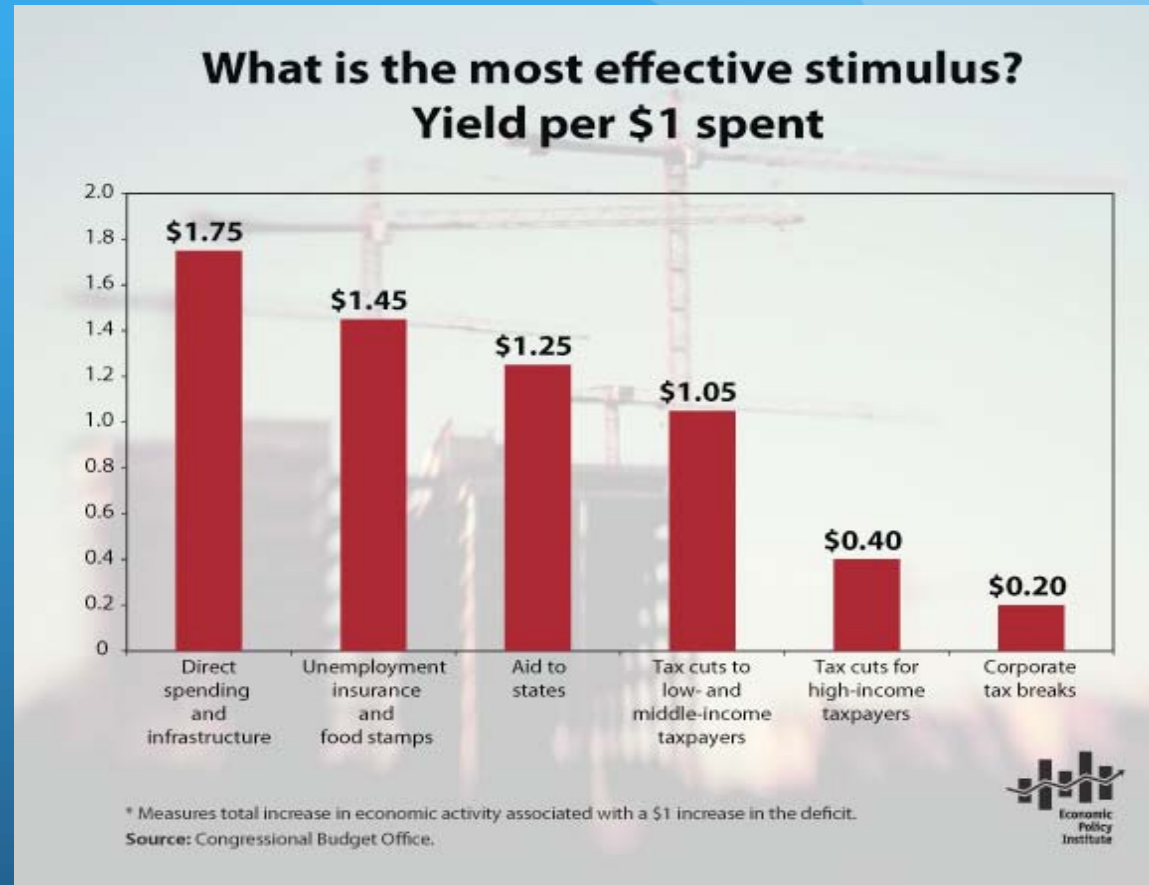
- Religion and Labor can be an important alliance in defending workers' rights
 - Many workers are involved in churches, faith communities, civil rights groups, and community groups
 - Many religious denominations have explicit faith commitments supporting workers' rights
 - Many groups such as civil rights groups, community groups, and others also support workers' rights

Solutions to the Crisis

-Extend unemployment benefits



-Create programs for new jobs



-End corporate tax breaks

What can you do?

- Join North Texas Jobs with Justice (JwJ)
- Attend a JwJ Workers' Rights Board hearing
- Join a union (if possible) or Working America
- Stand up for workers' rights by joining actions such as demonstrations, rallies, marches, pickets, leafleting, etc.
- Check out www.labordallas.org and wrbdallas.blogspot.com for more information
- Educate friends, family, people with whom you work and go to church on the crisis and the solutions. Ask them to participate!

-Many thanks to:

- North Texas Jobs with Justice
- Members of the JwJ Workers' Rights Board
- Workers who are not afraid to speak to the injustice they are experiencing
- Kevin Minister for his synopsis of the hearings
- The Economic Policy Institute for permission to use data and graphs from www.epi.org
- Judge Sepulveda and Judge Medrano for the use of the courtroom to hold hearings