

## Executive Summary

The Community Action Project released the 2007 report, State of Working Oklahoma: The Uneven Recovery Leaves Many Behind. The report details that while Oklahoma's economy has been doing very well in terms of the increasing amount and value of goods and services being produced in the state and low unemployment rates, the benefits of the expansion have been unevenly distributed. This economic expansion is not translating into greater opportunity and economic well-being for all Oklahomans.

Between 2001 and 2005, the median wage in Oklahoma, adjusted for inflation, declined by nearly 1 percent. Median household income declined 4.5 percent over the same period. For most Oklahoma wage earners and their families, the bottom line during this uneven recovery has been a declining standard of living.

### Findings

In terms of the general Oklahoma economy, jobs and the labor force, wage and income, and family self-sufficiency, the report details the following findings:

- ✘ Oklahoma's economy is growing: output and per capita personal income are increasing;
- ✘ While the state was slow to recover jobs lost in the 2001 recession, its economy is now adding jobs and unemployment is declining, although its employment-to-population ratio continues to trail the nation's;
- ✘ Oklahoma's labor force is undergoing a profound structural change that is shifting high wage manufacturing jobs to lower wage service employment;
- ✘ Wages paid to Oklahoma workers have declined in purchasing power even as productivity and business profits have increased;
- ✘ The decline in real wages has hit Oklahoma minorities particularly hard;
- ✘ The gender wage gap has been tightened through female wage gains and male losses;
- ✘ Household income has stagnated for all but the wealthiest Oklahomans leading to increased income inequality in the state; and
- ✘ More Oklahoman's are suffering increased economic stress and hardship as they try to provide for themselves and their families as prices for basic necessities - including housing, utilities and health insurance - outpace changes in wages and income.

### Recommendations

In order to build opportunity and increase economic security for working Oklahoma families, the report suggests that various measures be taken the following recommendations:

- ✘ Expand health insurance coverage,
- ✘ Increase the state earned income tax credit,
- ✘ Promote college savings,
- ✘ Expand consumer protections on payday loans, and
- ✘ Expand quality early childhood education.

It is hoped that these recommendations will help more equitably distribute the benefits of the strong growth of the Oklahoma economy during its current economic expansion and help secure the state and its citizens against the next, eventual downturn in the business cycle.

Visit our website at [www.okpolicy.org](http://www.okpolicy.org) for a downloadable copy of the full report along with 1-page summaries of keys economic findings and factsheets on each of our policy recommendations