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OAP Releases 2008 Minnesota Legislative Report Card on Racial Equity and Budget Tools for Hard Times.

*“Racial and economic equity matter more now than ever,” says
Organizing Apprenticeship Project*

(St. Paul, MN) March 18, 2009 ... At a news conference held this morning at the Minnesota state capitol, the Organizing Apprenticeship Project (OAP) released their 2008 *Minnesota Legislative Report Card on Racial Equity*. OAP also released a Pocket Guide for committee chairs and other legislators to assess the equity impact of budget proposals and a one page outline on Low-Cost and Smart-Cost strategies for advancing equity in hard times. “Racial and economic inequities in areas such as education, employment and health in Minnesota are one of the most serious long-term economic and moral challenges we face,” said Jermaine Toney, OAP lead policy analyst. “Even in hard times we must work for equity – by looking at the impact of budget decisions, investment and policies on racial and economic disparities in our state.”

Some Key Findings of the report are:

Minnesota’s state Representatives and Senators showed significant progress on racial equity leadership in 2008, the Legislature and Governor together failed.

Although the legislature sent 13 of 15 bills studied to the Governor’s desk, the equivalent of a “B”, only seven of the 15 bills studied actually made it into law. This earned the Legislature and Governor an “F” in 2008, down from a “D” a year ago when 62% of bills studied made it into law.

The Legislature and Governor showed some improvement in issue areas from last year

Health equity bills pass rate rose from 67% (2/3) a year ago to 100% (3/3 bills studied). Criminal justice bills pass rate rose from 33% last year to 67% (2/3), compared to 0% in 2005-2006

More legislators led and supported racial equity legislation

Last year there were 8 champions of racial equity who scored an “A”; this year there are 17. Last year there were only 15 legislators earning Bs; this year there are 84. Legislators earning A’s and B’s come from both political parties and all over the state.

Legislators – especially in Greater Minnesota – where constituents of color match or are less than the state’s percentage of people of color showed strong support for racial equity bills

Over one-third (41%) of the districts with less than the state’s percentage of people of color earned an “A” or “B”

“The Legislative Report Card and budget tools released today point to Minnesota’s exceptional opportunity to crumble color lines,” said George Thompson of the St. Paul Foundation. “This is particularly important in tough economic times. Minnesota is visibly changing. The potential demographic power of communities of color, the current and potential economic contributions of communities of color and American Indians, the devastating impact of persistent racial disparities – all point to racial equity as one of the greatest leadership imperatives of our era.”

The 2008 Minnesota Legislative Report Card on Racial Equity, Pocket Guide for Proposed Budgets: Racial and Economic Assessment and the list Low-Cost, Smart Cost legislation are all available at www.oaproject.org
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OAP Mission:

To advance a community-based movement to achieve racial, cultural, social and economic justice across Minnesota