

## Vermont Workers' Center

### The Peoples' Budget Report: Findings in Brief

The People's Budget Report presents a preliminary assessment of how Vermont's recent budget policies, particularly funding and staffing changes in essential public services, have affected Vermonters' abilities to meet their fundamental needs. The findings are based on 17 interviews, conducted between September and November 2010, with non-profit organizations providing publicly funded services in Vermont.

The report concludes that the state's government cut essential services and jobs despite rising needs among Vermonters, and therefore failed to protect economic and social rights. This has had a significant negative impact on Vermonters, who are struggling to meet their fundamental needs of housing, healthcare, food, education, and work. Disadvantaged and vulnerable groups have suffered most from these cuts to services, benefits, and jobs in a time of economic crisis. This has contributed to an increase in inequity and a decline in Vermonters' economic and social rights.

The research found reductions in the quantity and quality of services available to Vermonters, based on the government's funding decisions and operational restructuring of key state agencies. A significant number of jobs have been lost in state and non-profit agencies, while demands on these agencies have grown.

The reports' findings suggest that the state of Vermont is reneging on its commitment to meeting Vermonters' needs and protecting their rights. It concludes that unless Vermont develops an approach to state budgeting that prioritizes meeting all people's needs in an equitable manner, the state may find itself on a downward spiral of increasing inequity and impoverishment.

Key recommendations:

- ➔ Greater transparency, accountability, and participation in state budgeting. Vermont should begin a participatory process to create a budget whose revenue and expenditures are functions of what Vermonters actually need.
- ➔ Tax reform to increase equity among Vermonters and raises essential resources for meeting needs and protecting Vermonter's economic and social rights.
- ➔ Legislation for implementing a new healthcare system that makes healthcare a public good with universal, equitable access, and that uses resources in an accountable manner through single-payer, public financing.

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