CPPP Center *for* Public Policy Priorities | **News Release**

**For Immediate Release: 9/22/09** **Contact: Derrick Crowe 512-320-0222, ext 112 or crowe@cppp.org**

# METRO AND CONGRESSIONAL-AREA CENSUS DATA SHOW NEED FOR NATIONAL HEALTH REFORM

Austin, Texas – **The 2008 American Community Survey (ACS) data released by the U.S. Census Bureau on September 21 show that Texans stand to gain the most from national health reform.** Nearly all of Texas' metro and rural area uninsured rates exceed the U.S. average. Texas again had the nation's highest statewide uninsured rate, and some localities far exceeded the statewide rate of 24.1 percent. Texas entered the recession later than the rest of the nation and experienced low rates of unemployment through most of 2008, so these new data reflect only the very beginning of the recession's impact on Texas.

**"National health reform can provide the most extensive and immediate help for Texans in these tumultuous economic times. Texas can do its part to help low- and moderate-income Texans by fixing our broken public benefits enrollment system," CPPP Analyst Eva DeLuna Castro said.**

## Local Data Show Large Variations in Texas' Uninsured Rate

For the first time, the new ACS data provide local-level estimates for Texas' uninsured. Surprisingly, even with the country's highest uninsured rate in 2008, only one of Texas' metro or rural areas' uninsured rates fell below the national average of 15.1 percent (Killeen-Temple-Fort Hood, 14.2 percent; see Table 1). Texas' highest uninsured rates occurred primarily along the Texas-Mexico border, reaching a high of 38 percent in the McAllen-Edinburg-Pharr metro area.

The pattern is similar when looking at U.S. Congressional Districts, with only Rep. Lamar Smith's central Texas district (14.8 percent uninsured) falling below the national average. The picture is even worse for children: all of Texas' Congressional Districts had higher child uninsured rates than the national average (see Table 2).

## New Data Reflect Little of the Recession's Impact

Unemployed, working-age Texans have few options for health insurance coverage. With some of the highest premiums in the country and effectively no public options for health coverage, many unemployed Texans become uninsured. Because Texas did not experience the recessionary downturn until late in 2008, Texas' local uninsured rates do not reflect the full impact of the recession. From 2007 to 2008, the unemployment rate in Texas increased only one half of a percentage point, from 4.4 percent to 4.9 percent. However, in just the first eight months of 2009, unemployment in Texas grew from 6.4 percent in January to 8.0 percent in August, the most recent month available. This unemployment spike in 2009 means that the 2008 data released yesterday by the Census Bureau show little of the impact of the current recession on Texas' uninsured rate.

## Recommendations

**National health reform would provide the most extensive and immediate help for low-income Texans.** With the worst uninsured rate in the country, and some local rates reaching as high as 38 percent, Texas stands to gain more than any other state from national health reform. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimates that roughly 4.5 million uninsured Texans would gain coverage through the latest health reform bill in the U.S. House of Representatives. Secure, affordable health care will help Texas' low-income workers access decent care, even if they become unemployed.

**Fix Texas' broken enrollment system for public health insurance and food assistance.** With more people losing jobs and losing health insurance, it is more important than ever to make sure that state systems that process applications for nutrition assistance, income, and public health insurance are efficient, accurate, and let no Texans fall through the cracks. These systems must be ready to deal with current demand and any increased applications resulting from national health reform.

## Additional Information

For more on how Texas will benefit from national health reform, see http://www.texasvoiceforhealthreform.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/what-is-in-it-for-texas-2-rev-9-3-09.pdf.

For more information on the differences between the Census Bureau's data sources for poverty and health insurance, see http://www.cppp.org/files/3/CPSvsACSRevised.pdf.

**Table 1: Uninsured in Texas Metro and Rural Areas**

| | Total Population | | Children Under Age 18 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Uninsured People | Rate of Uninsured | Uninsured Children | Rate of Uninsured |
| **United States** | 45,080,009 | 15.1% | 7,329,046 | 9.9% |
| **Texas** | 5,745,286 | 24.1 | 1,195,974 | 17.8 |
| Abilene | 26,638 | 18.2 | 3,696 | 9.5 |
| Amarillo | 47,208 | 19.9 | 8,125 | 12.7 |
| Austin-Round Rock | 336,354 | 20.7 | 70,235 | 16.4 |
| Beaumont-Port Arthur | 69,611 | 19.2 | 12,302 | 13.3 |
| Brownsville-Harlingen | 139,388 | 35.7 | 31,129 | 23.3 |
| College Station-Bryan | 33,705 | 16.2 | 6,325 | 13.0 |
| Corpus Christi | 92,862 | 22.8 | 15,636 | 14.1 |
| Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington | 1,503,263 | 24.1 | 324,795 | 18.5 |
| Dallas-Plano-Irving | 1,052,433 | 25.1 | 232,837 | 19.7 |
| Fort Worth-Arlington | 450,830 | 22.0 | 91,958 | 16.0 |
| El Paso | 229,611 | 31.8 | 48,584 | 21.1 |
| Houston-Sugar Land-Baytown | 1,412,923 | 24.9 | 295,767 | 18.4 |
| Killeen-Temple-Fort Hood | 47,952 | 14.2 | 10,812 | 9.5 |
| Laredo | 85,696 | 36.2 | 19,983 | 22.6 |
| Longview | 45,701 | 22.9 | 9,927 | 18.9 |
| Lubbock | 44,423 | 16.6 | 7,565 | 11.2 |
| McAllen-Edinburg-Mission | 273,887 | 38.0 | 57,497 | 22.1 |
| Midland | 26,486 | 20.6 | 5,323 | 14.7 |
| Odessa | 38,280 | 29.4 | 11,120 | 28.2 |
| San Angelo | 20,751 | 20.0 | 3,751 | 13.7 |
| San Antonio | 423,602 | 21.4 | 82,625 | 14.7 |
| Sherman-Denison | 25,513 | 21.9 | 4,556 | 15.9 |
| Texarkana | 27,499 | 21.0 | 3,444 | 10.5 |
| Tyler | 44,341 | 22.3 | 7,007 | 13.8 |
| Victoria | 24,015 | 21.2 | 4,892 | 16.2 |
| Waco | 46,197 | 20.3 | 9,282 | 15.8 |
| Wichita Falls | 22,441 | 16.7 | 3,962 | 10.7 |
| **Rural Texas** | 1,012,432 | 19.7 | 214,549 | 15.3 |

Source: 2008 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau

**Table 2: Uninsured in Texas Congressional Districts**

| | Total Population | | Children Under Age 18 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Uninsured people | Rate of Uninsured | Uninsured children | Rate of Uninsured |
| **United States** | 45,080,009 | 15.1% | 7,329,046 | 9.9% |
| **Texas** | 5,745,286 | 24.1 | 1,195,974 | 17.8 |
| Louie Gohmert (TX 1) | 149,381 | 22.1 | 28,141 | 16.3 |
| Ted Poe (TX 2) | 145,359 | 19.4 | 30,919 | 15.1 |
| Sam Johnson (TX 3) | 191,827 | 22.8 | 41,918 | 17.6 |
| Ralph M. Hall (TX 4) | 162,296 | 20.3 | 31,922 | 15.2 |
| Jeb Hensarling (TX 5) | 164,487 | 23.0 | 30,910 | 16.1 |
| Joe Barton (TX 6) | 165,038 | 21.2 | 31,319 | 14.4 |
| John Culberson (TX 7) | 120,512 | 16.1 | 21,857 | 11.9 |
| Kevin Brady (TX 8) | 153,568 | 20.0 | 26,305 | 13.3 |
| Al Green (TX 9) | 243,323 | 35.2 | 48,298 | 24.4 |
| Michael McCaul (TX 10) | 185,406 | 19.6 | 42,228 | 15.6 |
| Michael Conaway (TX 11) | 155,762 | 23.3 | 35,265 | 19.9 |
| Kay Granger (TX 12) | 188,972 | 23.7 | 40,791 | 18.5 |
| Mac Thornberry (TX 13) | 128,804 | 20.7 | 27,236 | 16.5 |
| Ron Paul (TX 14) | 159,990 | 21.6 | 32,606 | 16.1 |
| Ruben Hinojosa (TX 15) | 238,290 | 32.6 | 50,207 | 20.5 |
| Silvestre Reyes (TX 16) | 214,376 | 31.2 | 45,600 | 20.9 |
| Chet Edwards (TX 17) | 147,615 | 20.7 | 28,425 | 16.1 |
| Sheila Jackson Lee (TX 18) | 219,613 | 33.1 | 46,526 | 24.5 |
| Randy Neugebauer (TX 19) | 127,392 | 19.7 | 25,744 | 14.9 |
| Charles Gonzalez (TX 20) | 186,415 | 28.4 | 35,794 | 19.1 |
| Lamar Smith (TX 21) | 120,289 | 14.8 | 25,090 | 11.7 |
| Pete Olson (TX 22) | 159,755 | 18.4 | 34,148 | 14.3 |
| Ciro Rodriguez (TX 23) | 183,108 | 23.7 | 39,321 | 16.9 |
| Kenny Marchant (TX 24) | 147,556 | 19.2 | 29,959 | 14.7 |
| Lloyd Doggett (TX 25) | 188,860 | 24.4 | 37,927 | 19.2 |
| Michael Burgess (TX 26) | 170,054 | 19.6 | 34,564 | 13.8 |
| Solomon Ortiz (TX 27) | 201,524 | 29.1 | 40,184 | 18.9 |
| Henry Cuellar (TX 28) | 258,544 | 32.6 | 54,925 | 20.5 |
| Gene Green (TX 29) | 277,439 | 40.6 | 59,949 | 26.8 |
| Eddie Bernice Johnson (TX 30) | 249,242 | 35.9 | 54,266 | 26.3 |
| John Carter (TX 31) | 123,473 | 15.5 | 26,587 | 11.0 |
| Pete Sessions (TX 32) | 217,016 | 32.6 | 57,043 | 31.4 |

Source: 2008 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau

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*The Center for Public Policy Priorities (CPPP) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan policy institute dedicated to improving the economic and social conditions of low- and moderate-income Texans. You can learn more about CPPP at www.cppp.org.*