

JustSouth Monthly

JSRI Perspectives on FAITH DOING JUSTICE

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Why the Details Matter

They spell out justice or injustice

by Fred Kammer, SJ JD

JSRI Future Activities

February 6

Fr. Kammer will participate in the NYC meeting of the board of the Jesuit Volunteer Corps.

February 9

Congressional Hunger Fellow, Sakeenah Shabazz will present [The SNAP Story Bank Project](#).

JSRI Recent Activities

January 19

Dr. Weishar participated in the Service Learning Fair.

January 19

Fr. Kammer addressed immigration strategies in a faculty panel on Trump's Administration.

January 19

Ms. Donovan and Fr. Kammer discussed the Affordable Care Act (ACA) on WWL's morning *Eyewitness News*.

January 18

Dr. Mitchell and Dr. Weishar provided testimony to members of the Governor's Justice Reinvestment Task Force.

January 13

Fr. Kammer gave an address on mercy at the mid-south catechetical conference.

January 12

Ms. Donovan published an op-ed in the [Advocate](#) related to the proposed repeal of the ACA.

January 11

Ms. Donovan participated in a panel discussion on child food insecurity in New Orleans hosted by Second Harvest Food Bank.

January 10

Ms. Donovan delivered a presentation on the ACA to the Justice & Beyond Coalition.

January 10

Dr. Weishar participated in a meeting of criminal justice reform grantees of the Langeloth Foundation in NYC.

January 4

Ms. Donovan moderated a community forum on the ACA at the Corpus Christi-Epiphany Community Resource Center.

In the first Reagan *Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981*, the Administration and Congress raised the rent on every elderly, disabled, blind, and poor resident in any kind of federally subsidized housing unit by 20% (phased in over five years)—from 25% of residents' income to 30%. It was only one of many ways in which the lives of the "least among us" were savaged in the budget bill.

In the same bill, lucrative tax cuts, programs, and other benefits were ladled out to the wealthy and special interests in so egregious a fashion that Reagan's Budget Director David Stockman later acknowledged that it resembled "pigs at the trough." It was only a part of a greater trend that has brought us to today's America that is ever more unequal and divided in income and assets.

A little tax cut here; a little crony capitalism there; a little squeeze of the "undeserving poor" there; and no real gains for middle America while the wealthy and powerful blame it all on the poor and stow their riches in overseas bank accounts and undertaxed assets.

Now we await a new set of bills and budgets designed to do what? "Health insurance for everyone," President Trump tweets—but what will it cost, what will it cover, and who will pay for it? "Repeal and replace," the Republican Congress has declared about the Affordable Care Act ("Obamacare") for seven years. But has anyone seen a replacement that the Republicans and President Trump can agree on?



What about future block grants to states for hungry families now eligible for the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)—the former food stamps program? What does Speaker Paul Ryan's proposal about SNAP really mean? The last big block grant promise of the 1990s replaced the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program (AFDC), which provided modest cash assistance to 68% of poor U.S. families, with Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). The TANF block grant has lived up to its cruel name and today supports only 23% of poor families. It does so with significantly less money per state and per family (which is the way block grants always seem to work ... or are they designed to do precisely that?). [\[1\]](#)

What too about block granting Medicaid—which is designed now as a federal-state partnership to provide health care to the poor and the medically needy? The Affordable Care Act extended Medicaid coverage to 11 million of the working poor, [\[2\]](#) meeting their needs with the federal government funding no less than 90% of the costs. Will the Republican plan to replace Medicaid with block grants to the states provide the usual "cure" of less-money-for-more-sick-folks?

The traditional three questions asked about political and economic decisions from a Catholic social justice perspective are:

- Who is making the decisions?
- Who is paying for the decisions? and
- Who is profiting by the decisions?

It is time for the American people—often too busy or too distracted to notice—to pay careful attention to the details of what will be hidden in the landslide of legislation that will be enacted in this first year of President Trump.

Monthly articles reflect the opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of Loyola University New Orleans. Please send feedback to jsri@loyno.edu

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