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Census Data Presents Mixed Bag for Virginia

RICHMOND – More people had insurance and incomes stabilized in Virginia in 2011, but more people lived in poverty, presenting a mixed bag for the commonwealth according to the latest data released today by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Health Insurance Coverage

Although 983,000 Virginians were uninsured, more Virginians had health insurance in 2011 than in 2010. Significantly, the percentage of Virginians 18-24 with employer sponsored coverage increased by more than 10 percent in 2011. Though people in that group typically have the highest uninsured rate, more than 41,000 young adults had private workplace coverage in 2011, which matches the overall reduction in the number of uninsured Virginians.

“We are beginning to see the positive effects of the Affordable Care Act in Virginia, particularly the provision that allows young adults to remain on their parents health plan until age 26,” says Michael Cassidy, President and CEO of The Commonwealth Institute.

Today’s data also shows a reduction in the percentage of uninsured children in Virginia. Just under 6 percent of kids in the state were uninsured in 2011, a reduction of nearly 11 percent from 2010.

Median Household Income

Another bright spot in the data is that Virginia’s median household income held steady in 2011, a possible sign that Virginia’s recession-driven slide in median income has finally hit bottom. Although the 2011 median income of \$61,882 remains significantly below the state’s pre-recession median income of \$64,594 in 2007, there was no real change over 2010.

Nationally, however, median incomes continued to slide, bumping Virginia’s median income ranking to the 8th highest in the country, up from 9th in 2010.

Poverty in Virginia

The number of people living in poverty in Virginia rose significantly in 2011, however. In 2011, almost 44,000 more Virginians lived in poverty than in 2010. Compared to pre-recession levels, 163,234 more Virginians lived in poverty in 2011 than before the recession began in 2007. The poverty rate for the state now stands at 11.5 percent.

The number and rate of people living in deep poverty – with incomes less than about \$9,265 for a family of three – also jumped in 2011. Almost 417,000 Virginians lived in deep poverty in 2011, up 10 percent over 2010.

The situation is particularly bad for kids. More than 15 percent of all children in Virginia – about 274,000 – lived in poverty in 2011. That's an increase of over 14,000 kids since 2010, and over 163,000 since before the recession started. Richmond and Virginia Beach saw the greatest increases over 2010. In both those regions, more than one in six children lived in poverty.

"These latest numbers illustrate just how many families in our state are struggling to get by in a tough economy," said Cassidy. "We need to continue our efforts to help them, not cut back when so many people need help."

In addition, the new numbers show that in 2011:

Median Household Income

- Since the recession began, nine of Virginia's 11 metropolitan regions have seen a dip in median incomes; only already low Danville and Lynchburg saw improvement;
- The median income in the Washington, DC area was 51 percent above the median income of the next highest region, Virginia Beach.
- The Washington/Arlington/Alexandria region median income was the highest in the U.S.

Poverty in Virginia

- Poverty rates among the state's 30 large localities were highest in the City of Richmond, Montgomery County, the City of Lynchburg, where more than one in five residents lived in poverty;
- Virginia's poverty rate is below the national poverty rate and the 8th lowest in the country;
- Virginia's child poverty rate increased faster than it did in the country as a whole but was still the 9th lowest in the country;
 - Child poverty is lowest in Fauquier, Loudoun, and Hanover Counties;
 - Child poverty is highest in the City of Richmond.

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About The Commonwealth Institute

The Commonwealth Institute for Fiscal Analysis provides credible, independent and accessible information and analyses of fiscal and economic issues with particular attention to the impacts on low- and moderate-income persons. Our products inform fiscal and budget policy debates and contribute to sound decisions that improve the well-being of individuals, communities and Virginia as a whole. Visit www.thecommonwealthinstitute.org for more information.

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