

Council for a Black Economic Agenda

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Robert L. Woodson, Chairman

Council Urges Black Self-Help Renaissance at White House Meeting

Washington, D.C.-- Building on a year of progress and a ground swell of support, particularly from the black grassroots community, the Council for a Black Economic Agenda is meeting with the Cabinet and President on January 13, 1986, at the White House to explore additional policies and strategies for implementing its development agenda for the black underclass.

Last year, the Council met with the administration and presented a program that included regulatory and legislative action and reform in the areas of public housing, business development, education and family policy. Four Council recommendations were echoed in the President's State of the Union message.

Since the meeting, legislation has been introduced in Congress on tax reform and education vouchers; additional state enterprise zones have become operational; and at least a half dozen bills are pending that will facilitate resident management and homeownership of public housing.

"Our emphasis in 1986 will be passage of some key legislation, with a continued focus on self-sufficiency for the black underclass," said Robert L. Woodson, chairman of the Council.

The Council will push for a black self-help renaissance nationwide that taps the indigenous capacities of black communities and institutions.

"We want to reassert the moral authority of our own value-generating institutions, such as the church, the family and our fraternal organizations," he said.

Specific Council proposals and activities this year include:

Tax Reform

- o Support the provisions of H.R. 3838, raising the income tax threshold and removing as many as 6.5 million low-income households from tax liability.

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- o Retain provisions of the current tax code (Section 167(k)) in the Senate version of the tax bill to provide rapid write-offs for investments in low-income housing.

Enterprise Zone Initiatives

- o Strengthen the gains of existing state enterprise zones by establishing an executive order directing federal agencies that deal with redevelopment matters to coordinate their missions with the state zones and by prioritizing federal program applications in zone areas.
- o Allow individual taxpayers to write-off a 100 percent deduction for investments in qualified small firms located in state designated enterprise zones or other community areas meeting distressed criteria.
- o Co-sponsor an international conference on the European enterprise allowance concept to explore its feasibility in the United States.
- o Direct the Department of Labor to experiment with the use of unemployment payments for job creation in at least five to ten states.

Education

- o Support passage and inform low-income parents of "The Equity and Choice Act of 1985," a proposal to increase the options of parents of disadvantage children, using educational vouchers. This proposal will strengthen the current Chapter I program and would not require additional federal expenditures.

Public Housing

- o Support legislation for giving priority to resident management corporations in the dispersal of federal rehabilitation funds;
- o Remove bureaucratic red tape and costly regulatory requirements that hinder the creation of resident management corporations in particular public housing developments; and
- o Allow resident management corporations to retain and reinvest their revenue savings and guarantee HUD subsidy at the previous year's level for three years.

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Family Policy

- o Encourage the creation of a family-to-family network nationwide and the formation of a Homes for Black Children Foundation, modeled after Detroit's very successful Homes for Black Children program. This program destroyed the myth that black parents do not adopt, or that black people can not solve their own problems. In its first year, Homes for Black Children placed 139 children and since its inception over a decade ago, more than 1,000. A national foundation would not only go a long way toward assisting with adopting this model nationwide but would provide a mechanism for financing an alternative adoption system for black and special needs children.

"We believe that cooperation on these proposals from the administration will assist the Council in building on last year's successes but, more importantly, will move millions of low-income black Americans into the economic mainstream," said Woodson.

"A number of meetings have already taken place with several members of the traditional black leadership, and we have reached consensus on three of our initiatives--resident management for public housing residents, tax write-offs for investors in distressed communities and establishment of a Homes for Black Children Foundation.

"Congressman Walter Fauntroy (Dem.--Washington, D.C.) has been especially instrumental in securing this consensus," said Woodson.

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