

## **Statement by Jim Weill, President of the Food Research and Action Center on the Release of the 2007 Federal Poverty Numbers**

12.5 percent of Americans – 37.3 million people – lived in poverty in 2007, according to U.S. Census Bureau data released today. This is an increase in the number of poor people from 2006, when 36.5 million Americans lived in poverty.

The number of children living in poverty also increased. In 2007, 18 percent of children (13.3 million) lived in poverty, up from 17.4 percent of children (12.8 million) in 2006.

The 12.5 percent rate in 2007 compares to 11.3 percent in 2000. It is unprecedented that poverty is higher at this point in an economic growth cycle, and the damage from the failure of the economy's growth to lift more people out of poverty is huge: if the 2007 poverty rate were just the same as in 2000, approximately 6 million fewer Americans would have lived in poverty in 2007.

All signs are that the poverty rate will be driven higher in 2008 by a slowing economy and skyrocketing costs for housing, energy and food.

"More and more households find themselves facing impossible decisions on how to stretch their limited budgets. That is why food stamp participation has risen to record highs. Food costs alone for low-income families, measured by the Thrifty Food Plan, rose by 8.5 percent from June 2007 to June 2008," said Jim Weill, FRAC president.

"We will hear a lot this fall from Presidential and Congressional candidates about their vision for America's economic future. A reinvigorated fight against hunger and poverty must be an essential part of this vision."

"And, there are steps we can take immediately to ease the increasing crises families face every day. Congress is preparing to take up a second stimulus package. Low-income families facing skyrocketing food prices need a boost in food stamps. Economists across the political spectrum agree that a boost in food stamp benefits is the most effective way to stimulate the economy, as well as a huge help for families confronting the worst struggles."

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The **Food Research and Action Center** ([www.frac.org](http://www.frac.org)) is the leading national organization working for more effective public and private policies to eradicate domestic hunger and undernutrition.