



# The Armchair Advocate

Brought to you by the Coalition of Religious Communities 347 South 400 East  
A Multi-Faith Response to Poverty Salt Lake City, UT 84111  
October 2005 1.888.747.8482

## Public Tax Hearings in Salt Lake City and Ogden

After six months of meetings on Capitol Hill, the Tax Reform Task Force took their show on the road this month, starting in Salt Lake City. Because they did not schedule a meeting for Ogden, the CORC branch there decided to hold its own public hearing. Reps. Neil Hansen and Kerry Gibson were there, along with Jesse Garcia of the Ogden City Council. The Salt Lake City public hearing was attended by many sporting "It's Simple. It's Fair." stickers, the theme for our campaign to remove the sales tax on food.



Members of CORC sport "It's Simple. It's Fair." stickers at the Salt Lake City open hearing, regarding removing the sales tax on food.



Rev. Bruce Russell-Jayne, Carolyn Somer, Nancy Groshart, and Rep. Neil Hansen discuss the proposed tax reforms at the hearing CORC hosted in Ogden.

## Sen. Greg Bell Visits CORC's October Meeting



CORC had its monthly meeting on Thursday morning, October 20. There was a guest speaker, State Senator Greg Bell, who is considered to be a moderate Republican. Sen. Bell has been a friend to CORC on many issues, and was helpful in understanding the position of the majority.

He began his talk by stating that removal of the sales tax on food was dead in the water. It was not going to happen. When he stated that there was no way that that much money could be found to make up for that amount of money the state could lose if the sales tax on food was removed Elizabeth Matthews pointed out the line item of..... *cont. p.3*



### Next CORC Meeting:

Thursday, November 17

8:30 in Salt Lake City  
Anderson Commons  
734 East 200 South

11:45 in Ogden  
Ogden UCC  
3350 Harrison Blvd.



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exempting taxes on business inputs at a cost of \$215 million to the state's general fund. Senator Bell explained that this was currently a very popular tax cut, as it is thought to promote economic development. Senator Bell explained that in order for us to be heard up on the hill we needed to learn to speak Republicanese.

Some of the proposals which the Legislature might look at would be to give the poor a tax rebate of \$75 per year. Another proposal would be to give the poor a card called a Horizon card which they could present at the cash register which would deduct the sales tax from their bill. Some interesting bit of trivia is how sales tax is distributed: 5.5% goes to the state, 1% to the local and .5% to the municipality.

Some positive statements. Governor Huntsman says there will be no tax cuts due to our educational system and our problems with the poverty program cuts from the national government.

Our own Reverend Dan Webster (an Episcopalian priest) asked Senator Greg Bell "Who in the caucus is speaking up for the poor?" Sen. Bell said it was a great question and that really, many in the Republican party do care about the poor, there are just different views about how best to do that.

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## Faith in Action

*by Vera Eini*

In the Unitarian Universalist tradition there is a saying that comes from the Koran "one hour of justice is worth 70 years of prayer." As Unitarians we may believe in religious freedom and freedom of thought but social injustice cannot be thought of as another person's freedom to believe.

There is a story of one who in ancient times preached righteousness over and over again to Sodom and Gomorrah. A friend chastised him saying, "Why do you continue to preach that these people will never change?" His reply was, "I preach so that Sodom and Gomorrah will not change me. Albert Camus writes, "our task is to find the few principles that will calm the infinite anguish of free souls. We must mend what has been torn apart, make justice imaginable again in a world so obviously unjust, give happiness a meaning once more to peoples poisoned by the misery of the century." If we are just one more face in the crowd and do not stand against racial injustice, the threat of war (which has never been more real), economic injustice, the exploitation of the poor and its antithesis corporate greed then we indeed become part of the crowd and are changed by their values.

The history of Unitarian Universalists is riddled with names synonymous with wanting to make changes: Clara Barton, Susan B. Anthony, Dorthea Dix, James Reeb who withstood torture and death in Selma; Donald Thompson in Jackson, Mississippi, a Unitarian minister who spoke out for civil rights and sustained multiple gun shot wounds for his stand; Theodore Parker, an avowed abolitionist and William Ellery Channing, champion of the poor. These people by word and deed speak volumes to us about the need for "faith in action."

I was talking to an insurance salesman about universal health care. His question was would I be willing to pay more for insurance to cover the old lady down the street. My reply was, "Of course." To him most people are only concerned about themselves. I remember as a teacher in a Catholic School teaching religion to a group of seniors in high school. It came to my attention that the girls had been shunning someone who was "different." She cried easily and was very nervous. I had always encouraged students to speak up about things and when I talked to the girls about their treatment of her one of the other girls said, "But she's different." I didn't often preach to people but I became very passionate in saying, "are we not responsible for those not as strong as we might conceive ourselves to be? Was our religion just to continue the status quo, or were we not responsible for one another and especially the 'different.'" I believe in the dictum: We are responsible for one another. These tasks cannot be accomplished alone. It is only in the context of community that we are strengthened enough to make changes needed in a world which is frightened and resists change. We cannot turn our backs on the poor, the sick, the downtrodden because if we do we are changed like Sodom and Gomorrah into believing that the ME generation is the foundation of our lives.