

CONGRESSIONAL SOCIAL WORK CAUCUS

Anniversary Update March 2012

CONGRESSIONAL SOCIAL WORK CAUCUS (CSWC)

"I am excited about the possibilities for our newly created Congressional Social Work Caucus. This Caucus will provide a platform in the House of Representatives where social work voices can be heard, social work concerns can be addressed, and social work's best and brightest can serve their fellow Americans in meaningful ways."

Chairman Edolphus Towns (D-NY)

The Congressional Social Work Caucus (CSWC) was created in the 111th Congress by social worker and Congressman Edolphus Towns (D-NY). The CSWC represents the interests of over 650,000 professional social workers nationwide and serves as a congressionally-approved bipartisan group of Members of Congress dedicated to maintaining and strengthening social work services in the United States. Through Capitol Hill briefings and events, the CSWC educates national legislators and their staffs on issues of importance to the social work profession and the clients served by social workers.

Every day social workers assist the disadvantaged, the elderly, children, Service members and veterans, and others facing life-limiting challenges. They find solutions to poverty, divorce, addiction, emotional distress, and other psychological, economic, and social issues. Social workers form society's social safety net. The CSWC puts a spotlight on the dedicated work of social workers in child welfare agencies, health clinics and outpatient healthcare settings, hospitals, mental health clinics, schools, government agencies, legislatures, social services agencies, private practices, criminal justice settings, and many more settings in the public and private sectors.

The CSWC was created at a time of considerable change and great uncertainty in our nation. The economic recession, which began in 2007, was wreaking havoc on families and communities. House foreclosures and high unemployment and poverty rates were making the case for social work clear. Joblessness and economic insecurity are foundational challenges for many individuals in need of social services, and poverty contributes to the incidence of mental illness, family violence, suicide, substance abuse, crime, and diminished capacity for health, family, and community functioning.

At the same time that social service needs were rising, social workers and social service agencies and organizations were dealing with budget cuts, fewer resources, and the expectation to do more with less. Although the nation was understandably facing a moment when fiscal responsibility was essential, investments in the social work profession save money in the long-run as a struggling social work profession has far-reaching and long-term negative consequences for our country. Although the need for social work services is continually rising, many social workers face low salaries, high educational debt, and safety concerns, and the profession is finding it difficult to recruit and retain enough professionals to keep pace with this demand. In addition, changing demographics are creating additional need for services for the elderly, as well as impending retirements of aging baby boomer social workers.

Congressman Towns created the CSWC in response to all of these challenges in order to ensure that a strong social safety net would remain intact for millions of individuals in need.

“The safety and happiness of society are the objects at which all political institutions aim.”

– James Madison

(quotation in the Library of Congress James Madison Building, where the CSWC launch was held)

OBJECTIVES OF THE CSWC

Initiate and support legislation to address unique challenges and opportunities for social workers.

Monitor and evaluate programs and legislation to assist and support individuals, families, and communities across the lifespan who are coping with economic, social, and health problems, particularly those with limited resources.

Provide congressional staffers with educational tools and resources directed toward improving the social work profession and the people served by social workers.

Assist in education and awareness efforts regarding the breadth and scope of the profession.

The CSWC will accomplish its goals and objectives through:

- Regular hill briefings
- Media statements
- Convening experts on specific issues
- Fostering interdisciplinary cooperation with relevant disciplines
- Working with various stakeholders in local government and communities
- Expand congressional and legislative internship opportunities for social workers

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE CSWC



Congressman Edolphus Towns and Congresswoman Allyson Schwartz at the CSWC launch.

Official Launch of the CSWC

The CSWC was officially launched on March 15, 2011 at the United States Library of Congress James Madison Building. Congressman Towns created the CSWC, and fellow social workers and Members of Congress Susan Davis (CA), Luis Gutierrez (IL), Barbara Lee (CA), Allyson Schwartz (PA), and Nikki Tsongas (MA) were the first members to join. Congressman Towns invited all Members of Congress who had worked in social services or non-profit organizations, or who had an interest in the profession of social work, the services provided by social workers, or the 10 million clients served by social workers each day, to join the CSWC. The launch was attended by over one hundred professional social workers, Deans of schools of social work, Members of Congress, government officials and staff, and relevant stakeholders.

Congressional Briefing: The Dorothy I. Height and Whitney M. Young, Jr. Social Work Reinvestment Act (Washington, DC)

A congressional briefing on the Dorothy I. Height and Whitney M. Young, Jr. Social Work Reinvestment Act was held on Wednesday, November 17, 2011 on Capitol Hill. The briefing was convened by Congressman Towns who introduced the legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Background

Professional social workers provide and advocate for essential human services for individuals across the lifespan. They serve as the primary workforce for guiding people in crisis to critical resources, often counseling them on important life decisions and offering support to families.

"Not everyone will need a social worker, but when life presents serious obstacles to one's well-being, a social worker can be an invaluable ally," said Congressman Towns. "We want to make sure that when people do need a social worker, professional help will be available."

U.S. Senator Barbara Mikulski (MD), Senate sponsor of the legislation, added, "We must have the workforce in place to make sure that our returning soldiers have access to mental health services, our elderly maintain their independence in the communities they live in, and abused children are placed in safe homes. In these tough economic times social workers can play a critical role in keeping communities together and helping individuals and families cope with the new stresses they are facing."

Congressman Towns, and other social work advocates like him, believe it will become harder for average Americans to get the help they need, when they need it, if additional federal and state investments are not made in the profession now. Services for older adults, veterans, and abused children are already at risk.

For more than 100 years, social workers in the United States have entered the profession with a desire to serve people in need, especially the most vulnerable. They have also led efforts to improve access to psychosocial services for people from all walks of life. Every day, social workers touch millions of lives through their work in hospitals and clinics, schools and universities, community and government agencies, private practices and corporations, as well as prisons and the military.

However, a job as one of the nation's 650,000 professionally trained social workers can also mean serious injuries on the job, significant educational debt, and a non-competitive salary. While the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that an additional 100,000 social workers will be needed by 2018, our country's 600 accredited schools and programs of social work often struggle to recruit and graduate enough students to keep pace with the volume and complexity of social needs in their communities.

The Dorothy I. Height and Whitney M. Young, Jr. Social Work Reinvestment Act is designed to explore and address challenges that limit the profession's ability to help millions of people in the future. This legislation will create the foundation for a professional workforce to meet the ever-increasing demand for the essential services that social workers provide. Professional social workers have the unique expertise and experience that will enable them to help solve the social and economic challenges that our nation is facing.

In an effort to address the long-term concerns facing the profession, the legislation would establish a Social Work Reinvestment Commission, which would analyze the current state of the profession and develop long-term recommendations and strategies to maximize the ability of the nation's social workers to serve their clients with competence and care. Demonstration projects would also address the immediate needs of the profession and would be established in the areas of workplace improvements (providing funding in areas such as social work supervision, incomparable salaries, and high caseloads), education and training

(funding the education of social workers at the BSW, MSW, and doctoral levels), research (supporting postdoctoral social workers in their research pursuits), and community-based programs of excellence (providing funding to replicate successful social work agencies and organizations so as to provide clients and communities across the country with leading-edge services). Together, these components would create the foundation from which the social work profession could continue to serve as a voice for not only the most vulnerable in our country, but for individuals from all walks of life in need of social work services.

This congressional briefing sought to educate policy makers, the media, and the public about the important work that needs to be done to reinvest in social work, a profession that has always sought to care for others. The briefing highlighted the importance of advocating and standing up for the needs of social workers, in order to support and protect society's most vulnerable.

Speakers included:

- **Dr. Jeane Anastas**, Professor, New York University/
President-Elect, National Association of Social Workers
- **Dr. Richard Barth**, Dean, University of Maryland School
of Social Work
- **Dr. Elizabeth J. Clark**, Executive Director, National
Association of Social Workers
- **Dr. Avis Jones-DeWeever**, Executive Director, National
Council of Negro Women
- **Dr. Tricia Bent-Goodley**, Professor, Howard University,
& National Association of Black Social Workers
- **Ms. Mildred Joyner**, President, Council on Social Work
Education/Department Chair, West Chester University
Undergraduate Social Work Program
- **Dr. Joan Levy Zlotnik**, Director, Social Work Policy Institute,
NASW Foundation

Congressional Briefing: Implications of Health Care Reform on the Social Work Profession (Washington, DC)



Congressman Towns hosted a congressional briefing on the implications of healthcare reform for the social work profession on Wednesday, February 16, 2011 on Capitol Hill. “Social workers provide a wide range of services in healthcare settings,” Rep. Towns explained. “With the influx of millions of newly insured Americans into the healthcare insurance pool, the demand for highly-skilled social workers will increase significantly. We want to be prepared.”

Background

All Americans deserve quality health care services when they need them. When the provisions of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) are fully implemented by 2014, approximately 32 million Americans, who currently do not have health insurance coverage, will be covered, and coverage will be more affordable for many millions more. The ACA makes vital improvements to health care access, quality, and services for millions of Americans with health and behavioral health needs.

Social workers practice as part of health care teams, and are specifically trained to address the psychosocial implications of acute

and chronic illnesses. They practice across the continuum of care including community and public health clinics, hospitals, nursing homes, home health care, primary care, veteran service networks, and hospices. The new law contains key provisions that address critical changes social workers believe are needed to improve the public's health, and to start moving towards a system that focuses on keeping people healthy and one that is affordable for all.

This briefing addressed the many areas where social workers can, and must, take the lead in the implementation of Health Care Reform so that millions of patients can receive competent care in a timely fashion.

Speakers included:

- **Robyn Golden**, Director of Older Adult Programs, Rush University Medical Center
- **Stephen H. Gorin**, Professor of Social Work, Plymouth University
- **Kevin J. Mahoney**, Professor, Boston College Graduate School of Social Work
- **Asua Ofofu**, Manager, Government Relations, National Association of Social Workers
- **Dr. James R. Zabora**, Dean, Catholic School of Social Services



Guests at the Briefing on the Implications of Health Care Reform on the Social Work Profession.

Congressional Briefing: Prevention, Treatment, and Services Research Funding in the National Institutes of Mental Health Budget (Washington, DC)

The CSWC held a briefing on Prevention, Treatment, and Services Research Funding in the National Institutes of Mental Health (NIMH) Budget on May 25, 2011 on Capitol Hill. Congressman Towns noted that, "Americans, regardless of age, deserve quality mental health care services." This sentiment drove his interest in holding a briefing to examine these issues further.

Background

"The mental well-being of our residents in this country is important to me and to social workers," Towns said at the briefing. "We must invest in social work to serve the mental health needs of our citizens and we need adequate funding."

Dr. Robert Heinssen, Director, Division of Intervention and Services Research at NIMH said that in 2006, the direct cost of mental health services in the U.S. totaled \$57.5 billion. He explained the number of people who receive treatment for mental health disorders has been frustratingly low. For example, he said experts estimate 60 million people in the U.S. suffer from some type of mental disorder; 17 million of them can be labeled as "severe." Of that number, however, less than half receive services. Of those who receive services, less than half garner minimally acceptable care. The director said the NIMH, in an effort to address the challenge of broadening treatment for those who need it most, introduced a strategic plan in 2008:

- Research brain and behavioral sciences to fuel research on the causes of mental disorders.
- Chart mental illness trajectories to determine when, where and how to intervene.

- Develop new and better interventions that incorporate the diverse needs to circumstances of people with mental illness.
- Strengthen the public health impact of NIMH supported research.

The latest goals for the department include additional research that addresses decreasing mortality associated with serious mental illness and increasing widespread use of evidence-based practices, access to services and quality improvement methods.

Panelist Stephen Baron, director of the District of Columbia Department of Mental Health, explained how his department benefits from mental health research and how important it is to continue funding efforts for NIMH.

Enola Proctor, professor and Associate Dean at George Warren Brown School of Social Work, was also on the panel. She said social workers make up the majority of mental health providers in the U.S. “We provide mental health services in many settings, especially those that are publicly funded,” she explained.

Proctor said mental health care in the U.S. is in urgent need of attention due to more veterans returning from war, a rise in natural disasters, and continued high unemployment ratings. She noted that for severe mental disorders such as schizophrenia, 95 percent of these clients receive no care or poor care. Racial disparities in care also continue.

“What we need now is more mental health research on improving systems of care,” Proctor explained. “We need to improve access to services and reduce disparities and reduce staff turnover.” She added, “We’re falling behind meeting our nation’s mental health needs. I want to urge the highest possible levels of support for research at NIMH.”

“I will work with you any way I can,” Towns told the panel members. “I will encourage more funding (at NIMH).” He said it is more cost effective to society to prevent and treat mental health disorders than it is to ignore the issue.

Speakers included:

- **Mr. Stephen T. Baron**, Director, District of Columbia Department of Mental Health
- **Ms. Denise Juliano-Bult**, Program Specialist, Division of Intervention and Services Research (NIMH)
- **Dr. Ronald Feldman**, Professor, Columbia University School of Social Work
- **Dr. Robert Heinszen**, Director, Division of Intervention and Services Research (NIMH)
- **Dr. Enola Proctor**, Professor and Associate Dean, Washington University, George Warren Brown School of Social Work

“The Caucus is being created at a time of considerable change for our nation, and a time of critical importance for our profession. The recent economic crisis has reinforced the value of a strong and stable social safety net. We look forward to seeing the work of our Social Work leaders in Congress used to help more Americans access better services when they need them.”

– Elizabeth J. Clark
*Executive Director of the
National Association of Social Workers*

Symposium: The Future of New York City's Children and Youth (Brooklyn, NY)

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW), in conjunction with the office of Congressman Edolphus "Ed" Towns and the Congressional Social Work Caucus, sponsored a half-day symposium on "The Future of New York City's Children" Friday, September 16, 2011 at NYU/Polytechnic University in Brooklyn, New York.

Background

The symposium panels assessed current resources and systems devoted to serving at-risk children and youth in New York City through education and social services. Invited speakers discussed current policies, programs, and funding levels and offered policy recommendations to enhance funding and resources directed to children and youth in New York City.

"This country has been cutting services for the poor, children and seniors for years. Go back and look at the record and you will see that this is a fact. And if you add up all the money we are spending on children and seniors it would not begin to make a dent in the federal deficit," says Congressman Towns. "I think that we need to recognize that when we make these choices we end up having to create other policies, laws, and institutions to address bigger problems on the back-end, and we do not save money."

Speakers included:

- **Mr. Bob Schachter**, Executive Director, NASW New York City Chapter
- **Mr. Jerry M. Hultin**, President, Polytechnic Institute of New York University
- **Congressman Edolphus Towns**
 - ~ **Panel One:** Educating New York City's Children: A discussion about policies and programs related to the New York City educational system and early education opportunities

- ◇ **Dr. Irwin Garfinkel**, Professor of Contemporary Urban Problems at Columbia University School of Social Work
- ◇ **Mr. Robert Jackson**, Council Member, New York City District 7, Chair, Education Committee
- ◇ **Dr. William Pollard**, President, Medger Evers College of The City University of New York
- ~ **Panel Two:** Positive Youth Development for At-Risk Children and Youth: An exploration of policies and programs designed to address the psychological, emotional, and behavioral needs of at-risk children and youth
 - ◇ **Dr. Joan Levy Zlotnik**, Director, Social Work Policy Institute, NASW Foundation
 - ◇ **Dr. Emma Jordan-Simpson**, Executive Director, Children’s Defense Fund
 - ◇ **Mr. Richard Buery**, President and CEO, Children’s Aid Society
 - ◇ **Dr. Vincent Guilamo-Ramos**, Professor, New York University Silver School of Social Work
 - ◇ **Dr. Mary McKay**, Professor of Psychiatry, Mount Sinai Medical Center
- ~ **Panel Three:** *Protecting and Enhancing Investments in Children*— A discussion about ideas and policies to ensure that adequate resources are available for children and youth through public sector funding and ways to spur private investment in children’s programs.
 - ◇ **Dr. Mary McCarthy**, Director, Social Work Education Consortium, University of Albany, State University of New York (SUNY)
 - ◇ **Ms. Zeinab Chahine**, Managing Director for Strategic Consulting, Casey Family Programs
 - ◇ **Mr. Bill Chong**, Deputy Commissioner, NYC Department of Youth and Community Development
 - ◇ **Dr. Katharine Briar-Lawson**, Dean and Professor, University at Albany, State University of New York (SUNY)
 - ◇ **Dr. William Meezan**, Director of Policy and Research, Children’s Rights

THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION HAS BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN ACHIEVING CIVIL RIGHTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS ADVANCES IN THE UNITED STATES AND ACROSS THE GLOBE FOR MORE THAN A CENTURY. THE PRIMARY MISSION OF SOCIAL WORK IS TO ENHANCE HUMAN WELL-BEING AND HELP MEET THE BASIC NEEDS OF ALL PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY THE MOST VULNERABLE. SOCIAL WORKERS SERVE APPROXIMATELY 10 MILLION PEOPLE EACH DAY.

Congressional Social Work Caucus One Year Anniversary Celebration

On March 20, 2012 (World Social Work Day), the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), held a one year anniversary celebration in recognition of the creation of the Congressional Social Work Caucus (CSWC). The CSWC proudly boasts over 60 bipartisan members from the House of Representatives and the Senate, and worked throughout the year on activities and events geared towards educating policy makers, the social work community, and the public about the critical role of professional social workers in all areas of society. International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) President Gary Bailey presented CSWC Chairman Towns with The Global Agenda, an international document created in conjunction with the International Council on Social Welfare and the International Association of Schools of Social Work, geared towards the universal implementation of human rights and social justice globally. The CSWC looks forward to an even more productive second year filled with briefings and events focusing on pressing social challenges and emerging opportunities for the profession.

MEMBERS OF THE CSWC*

Chairman Edolphus Towns
(NY-10)

Rep. Jason Ahmire (PA-4)

Rep. Karen R. Bass (CA-33)

Rep. Shelley Berkley (NV-1)

Rep. Sanford D. Bishop (GA-2)

Rep. Corrine Brown (FL-3)

Rep. G.K. Butterfield, Jr. (NC-1)

Rep. Andre Carson (IN-7)

Rep. Dennis Cardoza (CA-18)

Rep. Donna Christian
Christensen (VI)

Rep. David N. Cicilline (RI-1)

Rep. Hansen Clarke (MI-3)

Rep. Yvette D. Clarke (NY-11)

Rep. Wm. Lacy Clay (MO-1)

Rep. Emanuel Cleaver, II (MO-5)

Rep. Steve Cohen (TN-9)

Rep. Gerald "Gerry"
Connolly (VA-11)

Rep. John Conyers (MI-14)

Rep. Elijah E. Cummings (MD-7)

Rep. Danny K. Davis (IL-7)

Rep. Susan A. Davis (CA-53)

Rep. Rosa L. DeLauro (CT-3)

Rep. Lloyd Doggett (TX-25)

Rep. Keith Ellison (MN-5)

Rep. Bob Filner (CA-51)

Rep. Marcia L. Fudge (OH-11)

Rep. Raul Grijalva (AZ-7)

Rep. Luis V. Gutierrez (IL-4)

Rep. Alcee Hastings (FL-23)

Rep. Mazie K. Hirono (HI-2)

Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton (DC)

Rep. Rush Holt (NJ-12)

Rep. Michael Honda (CA-15)

Rep. Darrell Issa (CA-49)

Rep. Jesse Jackson, Jr. (IL-2)

Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee (TX-18)

Rep. Barbara Lee (CA-9)

Rep. John Lewis (GA-5)

Rep. Dave Loebsack (IA-2)

Rep. Gregory W. Meeks (NY-6)

Rep. Betty McCollum (MN-4)

Rep. Michael H. Michaud (ME-2)

Senator Barbara Mikulski (MD)

Rep. Jerrold Nadler (NY-8)

Rep. Donald M. Payne (NJ-10)

Rep. Todd Russell Platts (PA-19)

Rep. Jared Polis (CO-2)

Rep. Nick J. Rahall, II (WV-3)

Rep. Charles B. Rangel (NY-15)

Rep. Laura Richardson (CA-37)

Rep. Lucille Roybal-Allard (CA-34)

Rep. Bobby Rush (IL-1)

Rep. Linda T. Sanchez (CA-39)

Rep. Loretta Sanchez (CA-47)

Rep. Allyson Schwartz (PA-13)

Rep. Bobby Scott (VA-3)

Rep. Jose E. Serrano (NY-16)

Rep. Pete Stark (CA-13)

Senator Debbie Stabenow (MI)

Rep. Paul D. Tonko (NY-21)

Rep. Nikki Tsongas (MA-5)

Rep. Maxine Waters (CA-35)

Rep. Mel Watt (NC-12)

Rep. Henry Waxman (CA-30)

Rep. Joe Wilson (SC-2)

Rep. John Yarmuth (KY-3)

**As of March 20, 2012*

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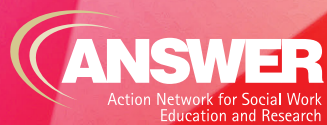
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For more information about the Congressional Social Work Caucus or the National Association of Social Workers, please contact:

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