

Dear Colleague,

As New York State faces unprecedented budget cuts, and the safety net for less fortunate New York State residents frays and threatens to unravel, now, more than ever, the Reform Jewish Voice of New York State (“RJV”) has a role to play in shaping the progressive social agenda in New York State.

Even as the Union for Reform Judaism moves to a new structural framework, RJV will continue to be a visible advocate in Albany and at the local level, giving voice to the critical issues that face our state, informed by values, tradition and teachings of the Reform Jewish Movement. As RJV has done for the past seven years, we will continue to provide background information on some of the most important policy issues, educational materials to our member congregations, and action alerts.

To further these goals, we are organizing a statewide advocacy *shabbat*/weekend devoted to alleviating the pains of poverty around *Shabbat Chaye Sara*, November 13-15, 2009.

We know that you will begin planning your 5770 calendar during the coming weeks. Please include in your calendar this statewide program on the issue of poverty. We know that this is a broad issue that includes a complex of concerns such as hunger relief, affordable housing, employment, and health care. Many congregations are addressing aspects of poverty already, especially with practical efforts to feed hungry people. We are asking you to add an advocacy component to this important work so that we will do a better job in New York State of eliminating the causes of poverty that plague too many people.

This summer, RJV will provide your congregation with comprehensive materials to organize your program including publicity, a sample sermon, talking points, and advocacy opportunities.

Please recruit someone from your congregation to be an RJV *champion* to organize and coordinate this effort. We will assist by providing your liaison with bulletin articles and

background/educational material on this issue.

Several congregations might choose to invite public officials or local experts to speak to the issues in a joint coordinated program. When congregations share a legislator, they could program more effectively in a cluster.

Someone from RJV will be contacting you soon to follow-up on this exciting event. We hope you will work with RJV to make the weekend of *Shabbat Chaye Sara* an opportunity to focus on social justice issues in New York State.

Please mark your calendar today.

Sincerely,

Marc Gruber