



National Meeting Summary

Welcome

Meredith Dodson, Director of U.S. Poverty Campaigns (Washington, DC)

Welcome to this month’s webinar

You can download the [webinar slides](#) from the Take Action Box on the RESULTS Homepage

Thank you for your work to engage lawmakers and candidates during the August recess; will hear some stories about those activities later in the call.

Congress has returned to DC and will be working on a number of issues this fall, including tax legislation. Along with this activity, next Wednesday, September 16, the U.S. Census will release its 2014 poverty data. This is an opportune time for us to generate media around the poverty data release, urging Congress to save the expiring provisions of the EITC and CTC.

Review Agenda

- Guest Speaker
- Campaign Update
- September Action training on generating op-eds
- Shares,
- Announcements

Experts on Poverty Share

Introduction of Experts on Poverty Project by U.S. Poverty Organizer Kristy Martino

I am grateful to introduce Ruth Innocent, one of our volunteers who is part of our new Expert on Poverty Project. If you don’t know about the Project, let me briefly explain. Too often, the voices of those who have experienced poverty are not heard by decision-makers, even though these “experts on poverty” have important experience and knowledge of these issues. Their stories are truly powerful; perhaps some of you heard these stories at our recent RESULTS International Conference in Washington, DC . These stories can really help create the change we need in anti-poverty policy. Therefore, RESULTS is working with a cohort of 15 people across the U.S., all with first-hand knowledge and expertise, to help bring these voices to the fore and we get to hear from one of them today. I’m happy to turn it over to Ruth to share her story.

Expert: Ruth Innocent, Raleigh, NC

Good afternoon,

Thank you so much for given me a reason to speak today.

I was born in Haiti and Haitians, for some reason, believe that the United States is the land of milk and honey. I didn’t truly understand my family’s economic circumstances until my

sophomore year in High School, living in Brooklyn NY. I asked my mom for a pair of shoes and she gives me 40 dollars and tells me to buy a pair of sturdy shoes. I go out and buy a pair black canvas Nike shoes with the white swoosh on the side- not sure if anyone remembers those. Let's just say those bad boys got washed a lot over the next three years, because I wore them until my graduated High School.

Years later, I found myself a single mom of 3 boys. Then I really understood what struggle is. Signing up for food stamps and public assistance was so humbling because of the stigma attached and how people look at you and treat you. My saving grace was that little refund I get at the end of the year- technically the beginning of the following year. Even till this day I am remarried, a professional woman working over 40 hours a week as tax accountant, I still struggle. I still look forward to that refund; it allows me to catch up on bills, boosts my savings account and even contributes to my home down payment dream.

I can't say that I've always been interested in advocacy or politics- as far as I was concerned my professional friends were in the same boat. Some of them have degrees and there's even a lawyer in there and yet they still struggle. I had accepted that this is my life and I also clung to the idea that if I work hard and keep up at my education- I'm currently an MBA student and keep moving up that corporate ladder eventually I will make it to that land of milk and honey. As I looked around the world and see what other countries do, I've gotten interested in monetary policies of other countries. I started thinking that something is not right, how can we claim to be the greatest country in the world and have children starving and going to bed hungry? I started to get angry and I knew I needed to do something. I found volunteermatch.org, which led me to RESULTS. Kristy met with me and explained the vision and I understood the plan. However everything did not fall into place for me until I went to the International conference in DC, there I understood how powerful RESULTS truly is. Lobby day made me understand the power I have as a US citizen and I will always have RESULTS to thank for that.

Thank you for giving me a chance to share my story.

Guest Speaker – John Breunig, Editorial Page Editor for the *Stamford Advocate* and *Greenwich Time* (CT)

Facilitated by Meredith Dodson

John Breunig is editorial page editor and former editor of The (Stamford) Advocate and Greenwich Time newspapers in Connecticut. Breunig has written about how his county copes with the widest income gap in the nation, and works annually on his papers' campaign to assist struggling families. He was a runner-up in 2014's National Society of Newspaper Columnists contest, and has won several awards for 9/11 coverage. His work has appeared in The New York Times, USA Today, The Week and San Francisco Chronicle. He is the recipient of the 2015 RESULTS Cameron Duncan Media Award for outstanding reporting of issues relating to poverty and hunger either domestically or worldwide.

- 1. What is the best way for a reader to approach an editorial writer or editor about doing an editorial or getting an op-ed published?**
 - a. Consolidated papers can get a piece in more than one outlet

- i. Know the broader company
2. Fridays are particularly busy; not the best day to approach a writer or editor. Mondays are better.
 3. Persistence is key. I get 6,000 emails per week. When contacting me, be polite, keep it short, have samples of your other writing if possible
 - a. Papers are looking for new stories daily, especially given restricted resources
 - b. They are interested the local perspective. Local stories—look towards op-ed side
 - c. Make sure you tell your story and why it matters
 - d. Can be frustrating because editors, writers are so overwhelmed and overworked to keep up with all of their work
 - e. Great if your op-ed is already written
- 2. What do editors look for when deciding whether to print an op-ed?**
- a. Make it local, how people are affected
 - b. Give something that is clean – think about how fits on the editorial page; op-ed is usually 500-900 words, ideal is 700. Shorter is better. On news side, you can continue a story onto another page (“jumping”), but on editorial page, you can’t jump. It has to fit in space provided so look to see how your paper lays it out and write to fit that format.
 - c. Fresh voices, clever writing is important. Also, be accurate – double check name of members of Congress; it looks bad if you misspell it. Put their first name, so as to match style.
 - d. In your by-line at the end, include what RESULTS is, how to get involved (website) so you can build your brand.
 - e. Headlines are hard to write so feel free to suggest headlines for your piece (paper could change it but suggest anyway).
 - f. Show how local issue matters in their community. If cant crack through, pay attention to letters – varied length.
 - g. If you get published, get someone to respond.
- 3. RESULTS is working on saving key provision of the Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit before they expire. Unfortunately, not many people are even aware of these credits nor the tremendous impact they have in reducing poverty, including many in the media. What can our volunteers do to make the strongest case possible for the paper publishing an editorial or op-ed on a somewhat unknown issue like this one?**
- a. Smart to assume they don’t know about this issue, most editorial page editors more experienced but not always true that they know about your issues. They know more about their local communities.
 - b. Find local stories.
 - c. Get your stuff in now. Resources will get tight on editorial page because the elections are coming up —essentially fighting for space over the next few months.

- d. Don't forget news pages – comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable, they get frustrated. Many are social justice-minded; you will want to get their attention. Pay attention to new staff, don't be afraid to approach them as well, they might want your voice.
- e. I see real enthusiasm at high schools, something good happening where people are volunteering, joining groups. If we get an op-ed by a 17 year old, this gets our attention – something different. Therefore look to co-write with someone, especially for novelty.
- f. Some of you may never get through to editor or writer, so it's not a bad idea to reach out to publisher's office to influence editorial

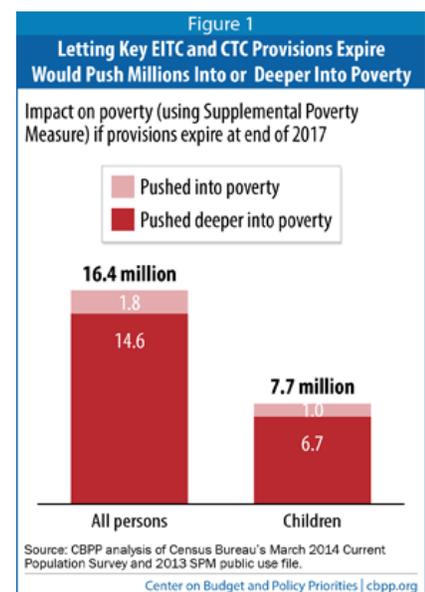
Economic Mobility Campaign Update

Meredith Dodson

- The [Earned Income Tax Credit](#) (EITC) and [Child Tax Credit](#) (CTC) are key supports for low-income working families.
- If improvements to the EITC and CTC expire, 16 million Americans will fall into poverty or deeper into poverty
- Our best opportunity to save key EITC and CTC provisions this year is in a bigger tax package
- May be combined with a highway funding deal – highway funding was extended until the end of October but this week the Department of Transportation announced that current funding will last into 2016
- However, House Speaker John Boehner and Senate Majority Leader McConnell want a multi-year highway bill completed this year
- Senate leadership pushing to extend expiring business tax provisions for two years (the so-called “tax extenders”)
- However, some in the Senate and House (including Rep. Paul Ryan) want to make some of business breaks permanent
- **If and when they proposed a permanent extension of ANY business tax credit, we must respond swiftly by pushing for “parity” with EITC/CTC** (cannot do one without the other)

As discussed during the conference, we are using key message points:

- Congress must **SAVE** key EITC & Child Tax Credit provisions
- The EITC/CTC are **PRO-WORK**
- If Congress doesn't act, **50 MILLION Americans will lose part or all of their EITC & CTC** (see our [state fact sheets](#))
- If Congress makes business tax provisions permanent, they must also save EITC & CTC (**PARITY**)



- Congress should **FIX A (GLARING) GAP** by expanding the EITC for childless workers

Great job – at least 100 face-to-face conversations with members of Congress so far this year!

- It is very important to follow up from your meetings at the International Conference or back home
 - Email aides you met with and thank them for meeting with you
 - Ask if they have taken any action on your requests
 - If they haven't taken action, ask them to and ask when would be a good time to follow up again
 - Also ask for an in-district meeting in August
 - PLEASE report on any Conference or in-district meetings on our RESULTS Lobby Report Form: www.tinyurl.com/RESLRF
 - If you're not sure if you were supposed to fill out the report for your group, there is a link on the form to see all the meetings that have already been reported

New Poverty Data This Week

- On Wednesday September 16 at 10:00 am ET, the U.S. Census will release its poverty data for 2014.
 - Not expecting a dramatic change in the poverty rate (perhaps a slight decrease)
 - This is a great resource for lawmakers and the media
 - <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/>
- On the same day, the Census will also release the Supplemental Poverty Measure for 2014
 - SPM takes into account the impact of programs like EITC, CTC, SNAP, and others on poverty
 - <http://www.census.gov/hhes/povmeas/methodology/supplemental/overview.html>
- On September 17, the Census will release the American Community Survey data for 2014
 - Allows you to search for state and local poverty data, which writers and editors want to see
 - Journalists can access this data on noon on Wed directly from Census
 - <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/>

September Action and Monthly Training

Jos Linn, RESULTS Grassroots Manager for U.S. Poverty Campaigns (Des Moines, IA)

Take the September Action:

http://www.results.org/take_action/september_2015_u.s._poverty_action/

1. Media Point Person should reach out to editorial writer/editor on Monday
 - a. Use our new editorial packet to make the case for publishing an editorial about the new poverty data and the EITC/CTC
 - b. Plan to follow up on Wednesday with the Census data once it is released
 - c. Send any local data you can (see Resources slide and we'll provide links to any local data the Census releases)
2. Each member of your group also draft an Op-ed about the poverty data and the EITC/CTC
 - a. Brainstorm ideas for an op-ed and support each other over the next week in getting it done (pick a buddy who can check in/provide support and feedback)
 - b. Start drafting your op-ed this weekend (takes time) and then edit it with new Census data next week
 - c. Each person plan to submit their op-ed to a different paper in your city or state (don't forget about weekly or monthly papers)
3. See more details in the September Action. For questions and coaching on editorials, op-eds, and LTEs, please contact Jos Linn (jlinn@results.org) or Meredith Dodson (dodson@results.org).

Monthly Training: Working to Get Op-ed Published

- Powerful vehicle to go more in depth about your issue, sway the opinion of decision-makers, and educate your community
- Op-eds should be 550-700 words (check your local paper for any word limits). That's about 5 paragraphs. Can seem intimidating but if you've had experience writing letters to the editor, you know that most of us tend to write long letters and then have to edit them down. So you probably already have experience writing pieces 300-400 words long.
- For many papers, anybody can submit and Op-Ed, so you all should plan to
 - If your paper prefers an expert, use your local connections to have an "expert" on the issue submit it or co-submit it. Perhaps a local business owner who cares about issues or sees their impact, a faith leader, a person connected program that impacts the issue (VITA director/volunteer, Community Action worker)
 - Don't ask these folks to write the piece for you; you write it and then have them look at it to see if they are willing to submit it.
- The smaller the paper, the more chance you have of getting it published.
- Basic format:

- Introduction: Lead (one paragraph) ending with your main point
- Three supporting paragraphs backed up with evidence
- Conclusion – not simply a summary but a call to action
- What do you want the reader/Member of Congress to do?
- Be specific and name names
- After you've written it, have someone you trust read it and ask for their honest feedback. Then, make any appropriate changes.
- Getting it published
 - Once you've finalized it how you like it, draft an e-mail to the paper/editor introducing yourself and a brief paragraph on why you're submitting this and why the issue deserves attention. Attach your op-ed to the e-mail and mention that you will follow up in a day or two.

Example: Dear _____,

My name is Jos Linn and I am a volunteer with RESULTS. I am writing to ask you to consider publishing an op-ed highlighting new information about poverty in the U.S. and right here in _____. As you may know, the U.S. Census just released its annual poverty data for 2014 and it contains some encouraging data on the effectiveness of anti-poverty programs like the Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit. These credits lift millions of children and families out of poverty each year, many here in _____. This new data can help educate our community about the importance of the safety net and the need to invest more in these programs.

I will follow up with you in a day or two to see if you received the piece and if you are interested in publishing it. Thank you for your time.

- Once submitted, do a follow-up call within 24-48 hours
 - Ask if they received it
 - Maybe you can gauge interest at that time
 - They may ask you for a picture and e-mail or phone number, which may get printed with your piece
- Call again 2 or 3 days later to see if they are interested
 - In major papers, if they are not interested within 2-3 days, not likely to print
 - You want an answer so you can move on if they will not print it
 - Withdraw it and move on to next choice
- Draft a powerful lead
 - Good lead and hook = hardest and most important thing

- Need to create an “AHA” moment
- Don’t just repeat the conventional wisdom; great op-eds trigger “oh, I’ve never thought of it that way”
- Ideas for a good lead
 - Tell a personal story about the EITC/CTC or experiencing poverty
 - Use a national event to highlight the issue
 - “The U.S. Census just released its new poverty data and it shows that anti-poverty programs work... and that we need to do more.”
 - “With a crowded and noisy presidential election already underway, the silence from candidates about poverty in America is deafening...”
- Connect something in pop culture to the issue
 - “The last Hunger Games movie will come out this fall. While that series may be ending, new poverty data from the U.S. Census shows that far too many Americans are suffering through a real-life Hunger Games, and for them, there’s no end in sight.”
- Be sure to state your main point at the end of the paragraph

Example: It’s 4 a.m. Lisa rises before the sun to douse her face in cold water at the local church because she doesn’t have running water at home. As she returns “home,” a dilapidated shack, she is reminded of the unreliable air conditioner, clogged sinks and a toilet that won’t flush. Her place reeks of the smell of urine, not belonging to her or those of any other human, but rather to unwelcome pests. Meanwhile, scattered in all this mess are her five children, stretched out in whatever comfortable sleeping corners they can find. She sees her children off to school and work, and then proceeds to her own job as a dishwasher, with hours that are not always guaranteed. This is the picture of poverty in our very own backyard, of our beloved Houston.

<http://www.chron.com/opinion/outlook/article/Soifer-Combating-poverty-one-person-and-one-6486061.php>

EXERCISE

Take a few minutes to outline what you would do for a powerful lead to your op-ed

September Action Resources

- September Action Sheet: http://www.results.org/take_action/september_2015_u.s._poverty_action/
- RESULTS poverty data editorial packet: http://www.results.org/newsroom/upcoming_u.s._poverty_data_will_show_urgency_of_saving_pro_work_tax_credits/
- RESULTS Media Guide: <http://capwiz.com/results/dbq/media/>
- U.S. Census Poverty Data website: <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/>

- U.S. Census Supplemental Poverty Measure: <http://www.census.gov/hhes/povmeas/methodology/supplemental/overview.html>
- American Community Survey: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/>
- RESULTS State Fact Sheets: http://www.results.org/uploads/files/State_Fact_Sheets_7.6.15.docx
- RESULTS Activist Toolkit: http://www.results.org/skills_center/activist_toolkit/

If you need coaching on pitching editorials or help drafting/editing your op-eds, please contact Jos Linn (jlinn@results.org) or Meredith Dodson (dodson@results.org) for assistance.

Grassroots Shares

Facilitated by Jos G. Linn

Isabelle Soifer; RESULTS Houston and REAL Change Fellow

Hello everyone, my name is Isabelle Soifer, and I am Real Change Fellow who recently moved from Houston to New York City. I was asked to discuss my recently-published Op-Ed in the Houston Chronicle.

The primary motivation for writing this piece was the fire in my belly, which began when I attended Congressman John Culberson's Town Hall meeting in Houston. The first person who spoke complained about how people were using food stamps to get water bottles, and that it is not a nutritional need. I thought: if he can stand up and speak his mind about that, why can't I? And what better way to spread the word than through the city's main newspaper? In addition, I wanted to write about the incredible student volunteer group that I was a part of during my time at Rice University, the Rice Coalition on Hunger and Homelessness.

Thus, I interviewed Truong Lam, a fellow RESULTS volunteer, asking him questions regarding his work with the Rice Coalition and about his work with Lisa, a mother of 5 children who we both worked with for a couple of years to help her get access to housing, food stamps, etc. Truong is the one who provided the vivid introductory paragraph which Jos highlighted earlier, depicting Lisa's living situation, which is all too common in our city. Truong and I wanted to grab their attention; to let readers know that poverty is not just the experience of a person on the other side of the world, but that it is prevalent in their own neighborhoods. To secure numerical data for my region, I looked up statistics on poverty via the American Community Survey, which is conducted by the United States Census Bureau. Finally, I wanted to show that both Rice Coalition's grassroots approach and the work of RESULTS are vital to helping bring an end to poverty. That we need to not only to strengthen policies, but also to strengthen our communities.

Once it was done, I worked to get it published. In order to do that, connections are vital. I asked one of our regional coordinators, David Schubert, who is well-acquainted with several of the editors at the Houston Chronicle. David took the time to edit my piece, and then sent it to the editors, listing my name, where I live, and my phone number, requesting that they consider it for publication. They asked several questions regarding the op-ed, asserting that it would be published that very Saturday. If you don't have media connections in your group, get to know at

least one editor at your newspaper. In this way, you will always have someone who you can reach out to. But the number one thing is to never give up. If you don't succeed at first, try again. The more times you submit, the higher your chances are of getting published.

Thank you very much for providing me with this opportunity to share with you all. If you have questions or would like my help with your op-ed, please feel free to email me at the address listed on slide 20. Best of luck in your publishing endeavors!

Ginnie Vogts: RESULTS Columbus

The Columbus Results group has been trying for a couple of years to get a face to face meeting with Congressman Pat Tiberi. Mr. Tiberi is a member of the powerful House Ways and Means Committee, which as you know covers the EITC and Child Tax Credit. Unfortunately, we've not had much success. So when we got an invitation to a town hall 40 minutes away we jumped at it, even though the focus of the town hall was on the Iran Deal. When we got there, another member of my group and I sat in the midst of folks who mostly seemed to be opposed to the Iran Deal. We listened to the Congressman and his guest, former UN Ambassador John Bolton, talk it down. We realized that interrupting this discussion to ask about US poverty and the EITC might not be the best strategy, as it could invite negative comments and get us into a counterproductive discussion.

So, using tactics RESULTS has taught us, we waited to talk to Rep. Tiberi until the town hall was over. The Congressman was taking questions and shaking hands with a small group by the stage. Luckily, I had prepared a packet containing our EITC and CTC requests, additional information on the benefits to 77,000 veterans in Ohio, and the fact that the House Ways and Means Committee Chair Paul Ryan favors expanding the EITC for childless workers. I edged my way up to the front of the group and when an opportunity appeared, I shook the Congressman's hand and offered him the packet, saying that I wanted to continue our conversation with him about the EITC. He looked surprised and said he was in favor of the EITC (although he had previously argued against making the 2009 improvements permanent). I said that was great since it encouraged work and how wonderful it would be if the key provisions that helped so many families, including veterans, were made permanent. I added that Paul Ryan himself was in favor of extending EITC to childless workers. He said, "I'm on the committee...he's my Chair." I said, "I know, that's why I thought you would also be in favor of this expansion." He said "I am" and I said "Good.," and thanked him.

Now I don't expect him to sign on to the House tax bills we have been pushing, but based on our conversation, I do expect him to not oppose making the improvements permanent and expanding the EITC for childless workers. To make sure, I will follow up with a thank you note and make sure he remembers our conversation.

Debbie Baskin: RESULTS Salt Lake City

We've had a busy month here in Utah! A couple weeks ago, one of our Real Change scholars was successful getting an appointment with Senator Hatch's tax aide—just one month after meeting with him in Washington, DC this summer.

With Senator Hatch being the Chairman of the very powerful Senate Finance Committee, other advocacy groups here in Utah have been made aware of the expiring provisions and have

formed a coalition to work on the issue. So our meeting included RESULTS volunteers and members of coalition allies united in our work to protect the EITC and CTC. At the meeting, we were able to show the tax aide a video highlighting Utah families who get the EITC and how much it helps. Our coalition partners also brought a mother with a powerful story about the EITC.

Senator Hatch's tax aide was understanding – he had once been a VITA volunteer – but he was also pessimistic about the challenges we face.

- He stated that Congress almost never acts until provisions have expired, and even then it is often so late that they have to work retroactively.
- He stated that cost has to be considered for all tax related issues and making the EITC and CTC provisions permanent is expensive.
- Finally, he stated that even though Senator Hatch is the Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, he needs the support of other members to get things like this done.

I felt discouraged hearing the tax aide act as though the Senator Hatch couldn't do this. Compounding my frustration was also the fact that after this meeting, I also attended a town hall with Sen. Mike Lee. I got to ask the first question at the event and when I asked about saving the provisions of the EITC and CTC, Sen. Lee was non-comital. I know he has proposed a plan that favors expanding the CTC for upper income families, while scaling it back for low-income ones.

But instead of seeing these two meetings as setbacks, I've chosen to see them as an opportunity to meet the challenge.

It's going to take a strong a sustained effort from organizations and constituents to get what we want. I am working with the coalition to ensure they take bold action. Our coalition has gotten two Op-Eds published and I plan to ask them to ask their members to call Senator Hatch and also to make sure the coalition follows-through on a press release they issued several weeks ago.

I'm also using the media myself to get the word out. Last week, I got two letters to the editor published in two different papers and one of them was reprinted in a third. In the letters, I urged readers to call Senator Hatch about protecting the EITC and CTC. After they were printed, I heard from friends who've shared my letter on social media and are making calls. I even heard from our local Citizens Climate Lobby group leader, who said he would call Hatch's office. This brings our group calls to Senator Hatch up to about 20. If his aide said he needs support, I figure that's one way of generating it.

There are things you can do too. Can you look for partners in your community and ask them to write Op-eds and call members of congress? Here in Utah we have partnered with the United Way, the YMCA, Voices for Utah Children, Community Action Partnership (CAP) of Utah, and Utahns Against Hunger. Do you have similar organizations in your community?

Can you request an editorial, write an op-ed, or send in a letter to the editor? And if it doesn't work the first time, can you write again?

Can you follow-up on lobby meetings and town hall meetings?

And can you urge your senators to talk to Senator Hatch about supporting the EITC and CTC? Senator Hatch is 81 years-old, he has a long history of helping children including working with Ted Kennedy years ago to establish the state CHIP program. He is an ideal candidate to make his legacy about helping children and his own state of Utah receives more Child Tax Credit than any other state. He holds the gavel for the Senate Finance Committee—let's encourage him to use it!

Announcements

Tia Lewis, RESULTS U.S. Poverty Intern

Background about Tia

- Originally from Queen Anne's County, Maryland
- Sophomore at George Washington University in Washington, DC
- Majoring in Human Services and Social Justice with a minor in Law and Society
- Found RESULTS through one of her professors
- Previous experience in direct service, primarily working with children and education.

Announcements

- National Webinar Rebroadcast and Live Q&A, September 16 at 8:00 pm ET. Login online at: <http://fuze.me/28130766> or by phone at: (201) 479-4595, Meeting ID: 28130766
- Please Fill out our Lobby Meeting Report Form for any lobby meetings you've done recently. www.tinyurl.com/RESLRF.
- Send Grassroots Board Member nominations to Jack McLaughlin (jmclaughlin@results.org) by September 15.
- RESULTS Free Agents, September 15 at 1:00 pm and 8:00 pm ET. If you live in an area with no active RESULTS U.S. Poverty group, please join us. Login at <http://fuze.me/27491886> or by phone at (201) 479-4595, Meeting ID: 27491886. Contact Jos Linn (jlinn@results.org) for details.
- RESULTS Introductory Call, September 25 at 1:00 pm ET. If you are new to RESULTS, learn more about our work by joining our next RESULTS Intro Call. Register for this or another call on the [RESULTS website](#).
- Our next National Webinar will be **Saturday, October 10 at 12:30 pm ET**
- Find these and other events in the [Events Calendar](#) on the RESULTS website.