

## Mini Brief on Poverty - Discussion Guide

### AGENDA:

- Social Time (30 min)
- Within each group identify who will be:
  - **Facilitator** to keep the conversation going around the circle, asking some questions from this guide if necessary. The role of the facilitator is to invite each member to share her perspective and help focus the conversation on understanding the issue and how to become an influencer.
  - **Timekeeper** to ensure that everyone has a chance to speak.
  - **Scribe** to take a few notes of what has been discussed and post a summary on the Policy Circle website.
  - **Reporter** who will report back to the larger group what was discussed.
- #CircleUp: Circle discussion (45-60 min)
- Circle Recap (20 min): The reporter and the scribe report back to the larger group what was discussed.
- Next Steps (15 min):
  - Discuss how to influence policy making (e.g. attend town hall meetings, write op-eds).
  - Determine date for the next meeting.
  - Decide on topic for next meeting. The circle could go deeper on the topic covered, focus on state issue or use another brief available in the [Year of Conversations](#) from The Policy Circle website.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

- What do you think the role of government should be in fighting poverty?
- What do you see your role to be in fighting poverty?
- What should we be asking our legislators to do and how could we reach them?
- Do you think our current social welfare system remains true to the sense of government's obligation to the poor in the early American era?
- What can we do to reform the current anti-poverty programs?
- What do you think about the Kemp Forum's proposals for fighting poverty?
- What are other ways we can empower and enable people to achieve upward mobility, specifically in our respective communities?

## **KEY FACTS:**

- In colonial times, poverty was treated as a local, non-controversial issue; work was expected out of every able-bodied person. Those unable to work -- the sick, poor, weak, those without any family or friends to take care of them -- were provided for.
- Since 1965, US taxpayers have spent \$22 trillion on alleviating poverty (not including Social Security or Medicare) which is a three times the cost of all wars since the Revolutionary War.
- In 2014 the poverty rate was 14.8 percent - about the same rate as in 1967.
- The federal government now operates 122 different anti-poverty programs.
- Norway is the only nation that spends more per person than the U.S. spends on social welfare.
- The food-stamp program has grown substantially over the last decade. In 2008, enrollment was below 30 million, and the program cost \$40 billion. By 2013, enrollment rose to 47.6 million and cost \$80 billion.
- The Kemp Forum of January 2016 featured the following ideas for reform:
  - 1 – **Look for solutions in the community.**
  - 2 – **Education reform.**
  - 3 – **School Choice.**
  - 4 – **Criminal Justice reform.**
  - 5 – **Job Training.**
  - 6 – **Regulatory Reform.** Dodd Frank has hurt entrepreneurs by limiting access to loans needed to create or expand a business.
  - 7 – **Tax Reform for Job Creation.**
  - 8 – **Evidence-Based Policy Making:** Another step in making government work better for people is analyzing whether or not programs are actually effective.