



Vision, Values & Action

To Improve Our Communities

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{ **Annual Report 2015**



There have been several informal discussions in 2015 about the Galveston Living Wage Study Group continuing as a separate entity or as a sub-group or committee of Gulf Coast Interfaith. Many have felt that most folks are confused about the relationship of GCI to the Study Group or already believe it is part of GCI. It was agreed that it would probably be best to continue as a group within GCI and that the group have a separate advisory committee to advise and consult as needed. No final decision has been made and the discussions continue. There have also been informal discussions about reprioritizing issues for 2016 and restructuring the administration of GCI's efforts.



GCI leader Joe Compian leading the March 6th Living Wage house meeting at the Galveston Islamic Center as Father Maynard, Father Richard and others listen and participate.

On March 11th GCI leader Steve McIntyre attended a meeting of the Galveston Ministerial Alliance at B’Nai Israel Temple to discuss the upcoming 3rd Annual

Living Wage Conference on September 28th. During the meeting Rabbi Marshal Klaven volunteered to participate in the conference on a panel of religious leaders that were to discuss faith traditions and McIntyre was invited to attend future GMA meetings as a representative of GCI.

On April 17th NAACP Galveston Unit 6180 held its annual Freedom Fund Banquet where Steve McIntyre was awarded its Unsung Hero Award-faith based organization/individual award for his work with Gulf Coast Interfaith.

Galveston County Collaborating Organizations

GCI made its office at 2728 Ave Q available to the Galveston County Collaborating Organizations¹ (GCCO or CO) for meetings on January 23rd and March 14th. There were wide ranging discussions covering Sandpiper Cove Apartments, affordable housing, payday lending ordinances, Section 3, rebuilding public housing, living wages, and social justice and prioritizing the needs of the community and the available volunteer time. On June 17th the CO met in the first of many meetings at GCI's office to discuss the need for Texas and national support to address the efforts of the local powers-that-be on the Galveston Charter Review Committee who were pushing for a change of the City of Galveston election system from 6-1 to a 4-2-1 hybrid at-large system that would diminish the voting rights of minorities. Meetings were also held concerning the Charter Review Committee effort to privatize the Galveston Sanitation Department and a subsequent proposal by the Charter Review Committee to change the City of Galveston election system from 6-1 to a strong mayor system similar to Texas City. Additional CO meetings were held concerning the redevelopment of the infrastructure of the Northside of Galveston and the proper use of the remaining \$44M in Hurricane Ike CDBG Round 2 funds.

¹ The membership of the coalition known as the Galveston County Collaborating Organizations varies depending on the issue. Generally the CO is comprised of: NAACP Galveston Unit 6180, LULAC Galveston Council 151, Galveston Coalition for Justice, Galveston Northside Task Force, Gulf Coast Interfaith, Barbour's Chapel Community Development Corporation, NAACP Mainland Branch Unit 6201, NAACP Dickinson/Bay Area Branch Unit 6280, LULAC Texas City Council 255, Gulf Coast Homeless Coalition, LULAC Galveston Council 22270.

EMPLOYMENT

Living Wage Study Group

The Galveston Living Wage Study Group held their monthly meetings at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, St. Patrick Catholic Church, Live Oak Missionary Baptist Church, or the GCI Office during 2015.

Outreach

A focused living wage house meeting was held on March 6th at the Galveston Islamic Center. It was attended by six Islamic Center members. The meeting was led by GCI leaders Joe Compian and Steve McIntyre with the participation and assistance of Father Maynard Tetreault, Lisa Windsor, and Rick Altemose. A few days later on March 10th McIntyre made a presentation about the living wage effort in Galveston to the Neighborhood Democrats Club in League City and a similar presentation on April 16th to the St. Vincent's Episcopal House Board of Directors and then again on April 22nd for the North County Democrats Club in Dickinson.

3rd Annual Living Wage Conference on September 28, 2015

The 3rd Annual Living Wage Conference was held on the last Monday in September, 2015 at St. Patrick Catholic Church.² It was the largest conference so far and was sponsored by Gulf Coast Interfaith, Galveston Coalition for Justice, Galveston Northside Taskforce, NAACP Galveston Unit 6180, LULAC Council 151, Gulf Coast Homeless Coalition, The Children's Center Inc., Restaurant

² http://gulfcoastinterfaith.org/yahoo_site_admin/assets/docs/NEWS-Galveston_Living_Wage_Conference_set_for_Sept_28-Galveston_County_Daily_News-eEdition-B4-92015.263113427.pdf

Opportunities Centers United, County Commissioner Stephen Holmes, Rt. Rev. C. Andrew Doyle of Episcopal Church of Texas, Baptist Ministers Association of Galveston, Archbishop Emeritus Joseph A. Fiorenza of Galveston-Houston Catholic Diocese, United Way of Galveston, The Jesse Tree, St. Vincent's House, Galveston Ministerial Alliance, Galveston Catholic Charities, National Employment Law Project, Students Together for Service, and Galveston County Labor Council-AFL/CIO. There were presentations on religious teachings concerning workers' rights, living wage ordinances, Obamacare, rights of union and non-union workers, wage enforcement, and enforcement of federal Sec. 3 obligations.³



3rd Annual Living Wage Conference

All of these quiet conversations over the last three years between people of goodwill have been helpful in gaining a better understanding of the working lives of our friends and neighbors in Galveston. Similar conversations have been happening more and more frequently around our country. Some of those conversations have evolved into debate and action and has changed the lives of workers and their families.

³ http://gulfcoastinterfaith.org/events/living_wage_conference_2015

During the closing of the wage conference GCI leader McIntyre took a few moments to put the last three years in perspective for the attendees.⁴

Good evening.

As some of you know we have had cooperative meetings and communication with- GISD, Galveston, UTMB, Texas A&M, COM, and Galveston College, Port Authority, Park Board, and Galveston Housing Authority. They have provided us information and data that we are processing and reviewing. We may need to return to some of them for clarification and additional information.

We have also contacted the contractors for UTMB and A&M and GHA.

The research on the data and evaluation about seeking additional data is ongoing. At a later date we will decide whether to hold another limited conference before next year's annual living wage conference to discuss our conclusions or simply issue a press release and post our findings on-line at the GCI website.

Some of you may recall that Supt. Nichols announced at the beginning of our conference last year that a \$.50 per hour pay raise for almost 100 low wage workers at GISD had been awarded.

Some of you may have noticed in the Sept. 11th Daily News that the city has approved a 2% pay raise for all employees at City of Galveston and also a targeted raise that averaged to be a 4.2% raise for 141 employees because they were deemed to be underpaid. The pay raises for these 141 workers averaged \$1,576 for each worker. There was a total of over \$1 million (\$1.05M)(\$1,050,000) in raises for our city employees.

Joe Compian and I also met briefly with the Park Board on Sept. 22nd to invite the board to this conference and while there we were told that the Park Board's finance committee will begin studying the wages of its workers very soon. Shortly before the conference tonight I was told by Park Board member Rev. Kerry Tillmon that the Park Board has decided to raise the minimum wage for all Park Board workers to \$9.00.

⁴ Based upon prepared notes and recollection.

These changes by local community leaders make a difference, a real difference in the lives of the working people of Galveston and in our local economy. This money is spent in our local stores for food, diapers, and shoes. It helps pay the rent and house payments and utility bills. But we need to keep studying and talking about this issue. I believe people of good will and with different points of view can sit down together to study a problem and reach a solution. As many of us know, more and more cities and states around this country have been having this discussion and have concluded that a reasonable solution is to raise wages.

On Sunday morning Councilmember Norman Pappous emailed Heber Taylor and me and directed us to take a look at “The High Public Cost of Low Wages” - UC Berkeley Labor Center - April 13, 2015. It has been posted at the GCI website at Resources > Employment. I encourage all of you to read it. For those of you who would not think that Norman and I could ever possibly agree on anything, take a few minutes to read the article. It is a good starting point for a conversation.

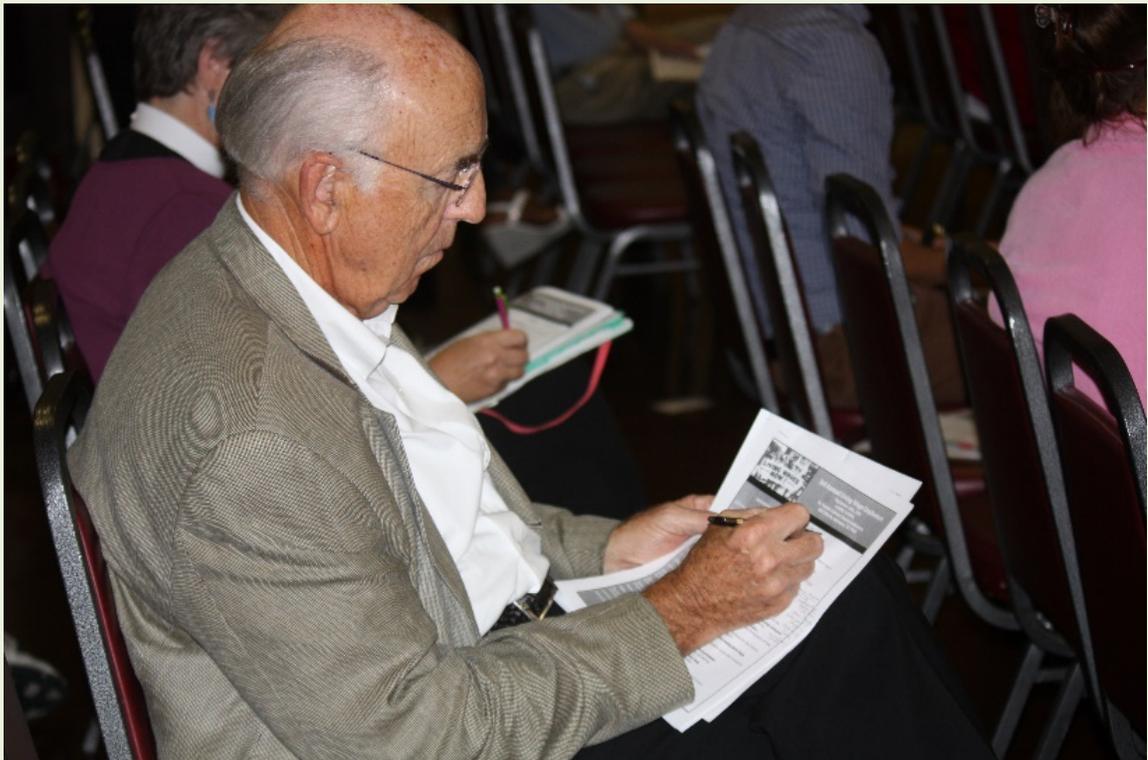


Panel: Religious Teachings on Workers' Rights with Rev. Kevin L. Hodge, Sr., Rabbi Marshal Klaven, Dr. Ahmed Ahmed, Father Maynard Tetreault

Students Together for Service volunteers signing in attendees Dr. Dayle Taylor & Heber Taylor



Rev. Susan Kennard and Rev. Ray Pinarid taking notes during the Living Wage Conference



GCI Employment Survey

The hard copy of the GCI survey was edited by adding an easier link to the internet for online entry of the requested data. Lisa Windsor and Steve McIntyre met on March 5th to discuss better use of social media like Twitter and Facebook to publicize the employment survey at GCI's website. McIntyre also attended UTMB's Students Together for Service (STS) Healthy Living Event at McGuire Dent Center on April 18th where GCI's Employment Surveys and GCI newsletters were passed out and attendees assisted in completing the survey online. Ana Rivera and Steve McIntyre reported in July that St. Vincent's House, The Jesse Tree, Galveston Catholic Charities, and Students Together for Service were assisting low wage workers in completing the GCI employment survey. The answers to the 15 survey questions were to be used to evaluate and determine the best employer for low wage workers in Galveston. It was anticipated the best employer would be announced by GCI during the Thanksgiving holiday but it was delayed until a larger survey sample was completed.⁵



In attendance at the 3rd Annual Living Wage Conference were: Rev. Ray Pinard, Rev. Susan Kennard, Heber Taylor and Dr. Dayle Taylor, Dr. Craig Brown, Marcy Casey, Supt. Larry Nichols, Col. Lisa Windsor, Laura Murrell, Mary Patrick, Maddie Sloan, Rev. Freda Brown, Dr. Annette Scott, Lillie Ann Aleman, Lloyd Criss, Mike Henderson, Bill Quiroga, and Lee Medley

⁵ http://gulfcostinterfaith.org/yahoo_site_admin/assets/docs/NEWS-Employment_survey_could_be_beneficial_for_local_residents_-_The_Galveston_County_Daily_News_News-A1-92915.271153717.pdf

Section 3

McIntyre met with John Simsen on February 9th at Galveston city hall to discuss questions and concerns about requested documents that were later produced on March 3rd. Simsen and McIntyre also informally discussed and speculated about the reasonableness and desirability of adopting a comprehensive “Sec. 3” policy for the city and not just a policy tied to HUD funds.

Payday Lending Ordinance

Texas Appleseed staff attorney, Ann Baddour, and Galveston Councilmember Terrilyn Tarlton, former Councilmember Elizabeth Beeton, and GCI leader Steve McIntyre worked together to research, draft, and obtain passage of a Payday Lending Ordinance in Galveston. It passed in a 5-1 vote on Jan. 22nd. Galveston is the 22nd city to pass an ordinance and joins Dickinson in Galveston County and other cities-Dallas, Houston, San Antonio, El Paso, Amarillo, Austin, etc. Dickinson passed an ordinance in September, 2014.

After a discussion about the effect of payday lending facilities on low wage workers, it was agreed passing an ordinance in Texas City would help protect Texas City as well as Galveston and Dickinson low wage workers. With the assistance of GCI leader Joe Compian in scheduling a meeting, McIntyre met with Texas City Councilmember Thelma Bowie on March 11th concerning the adoption of a payday lending ordinance in Texas City. Bowie subsequently presented a copy of the model Texas Municipal League ordinance and supporting information to Mayor Doyle for his review. Around July 9th Bowie advised GCI that an ordinance would not be pursued at this time because of the anticipated costs of enforcement and the possibility of new federal regulation from the Federal Trade Commission or Consumer Financial Protection Bureau that may supplant anything adopted by a city or state.

There were subsequent discussions among members of the Galveston County Collaborating Organizations concerning the need and efforts required to pass an ordinance in other cities in Galveston County.

DEMOCRACY

The Collaborating Organizations based in Galveston were alerted by GCI leader Cornelia Banks that the Galveston Charter Review Committee had voted 6-3 on May 4th to recommend to the City Council to place changing the 6-1 single member district election system to a hybrid 4-2-1 system with four districts, two at large and the mayor at large, on the November ballot. A similar proposal prompted the Collaborating Organizations to file an objection with the Department of Justice in 2011 and, once again, the proposal was rejected by DOJ as it had been three previous times under Presidents Bush, Clinton, and Bush.

Led by NAACP and LULAC the CO quickly mobilized and decided to once again resist the effort to diminish the voting rights of minority residents in Galveston. The CO attended the May 21st and subsequent Charter Review meetings. Letters were sent on May 29th to US Attorney General Lynch, Pulitzer Prize winning columnist Leonard Pitts, and Charter Review Committee Chairman Fred Raschke expressing concern about the recommendation of the Charter Review Committee.

On June 1st a strategy session was held at Ave. L Missionary Baptist Church. Although apparently supported by the Daily News in a June 21st editorial, two Guest Columns from the CO opposing the 4-2-1 election system were published in the Galveston County Daily News on June 4th⁶ and July 12th.⁷ On June 9th an Open Records Act request was submitted by the CO to Galveston for copies of all minutes and tapes of the Charter Review Committee meetings concerning changing the election system.

⁶ http://gulfoastinterfaith.org/yahoo_site_admin/assets/docs/NEWS-Loss_of_voting_rights_proposed_46_days_before_Juneteenth-The_Galveston_Daily_News-E-edition-pB4-6415.154171252.pdf

⁷ http://gulfoastinterfaith.org/yahoo_site_admin/assets/docs/NEWS-Killing_mockingbirds_in_Galveston-Galveston_County_Daily_News-E-edition-B4-71215_1.19565323.pdf

At the June 23rd meeting of the Charter Review Committee some public comments were finally permitted which resulted in Prof. Karl Eschbach being requested to attend the August 25th Charter Review meeting to discuss Galveston demographics and the impossibility of drawing district lines in a 4-2-1 election system that does not diminish the voting rights of minorities.

The CO also participated in informal meetings with members of the Charter Review Committee and City Council to express their deep concern. Presentations were also given at City Council meetings on June 11th by NAACP Vice-President Rev. Hodge⁸ and on July 23rd by LULAC and GCI leader Joe Compian.⁹

While acting locally in an attempt to end the fifth attempt under the fourth president to change the election system, NAACP and LULAC also reached out to Texas and US civil rights leaders in case the unified local effort failed to stop the placement of the discriminatory 4-2-1 election system change on the November ballot.

On July 23rd the City Council voted to not have a Charter election about any issue in November and passed a resolution allowing the Charter Review Committee more time to work but specifically removed a change in the single member district system from its review. The invitation to Prof. Eschbach was cancelled but then a member of the Committee raised the possibility of changing the system to a “strong mayor” form of government similar to Texas City by giving the mayor more power and duties and reducing the elected district council members to a mostly advisory capacity. Committee member Rocky Sullivan and Asst. City Attorney were directed to gather information about such a system. The Committee discussed the strong mayor system on October 26th where the discussion eventually ended without any action because of a lack of time to fully study such a significant change before the final report that was to be submitted at

⁸ See public comment on non-agenda items at Item 9B from 6:45-14:17.
<http://galvestontx.swagit.com/play/06112015-671>

⁹ See public comment on agenda items at Item 9A from 20:40-24:50.
<http://galvestontx.swagit.com/play/07232015-645>

the next council meeting on November 19th. Consequently, federal litigation prompted by similar action by the powers-that-be in Pasadena was avoided in Galveston and further action to change the single member district system ended for at least two years when a new charter review committee can be appointed once again.¹⁰

HURRICANE IKE RECOVERY and HOUSING

Northside Development

Meetings among the leadership of the CO aka “Local Advocates”¹¹ (Gulf Coast Interfaith, Galveston Coalition for Justice, Galveston Northside Taskforce, NAACP Galveston Unit 6180, and LULAC Council 151) were held throughout the summer and fall to discuss the stagnation of the redevelopment of the Northside and the use of the remaining \$44M in Ike Round 2 infrastructure funds.

A meeting called by Leon Phillips was held at Moody Mansion on August 31st. It was attended by leaders from the Local Advocates as well as Mayor Yarbrough and Jeff Sjostrom, President, Galveston Economic Development Partnership. Another meeting at City Hall on October 5th was jointly hosted by former NAACP President David Miller and Mayor Jim Yarbrough and included the Local Advocates as well as other interested parties-St. Vincent’s House, MBS, Anthony

¹⁰ http://gulfoastinterfaith.org/yahoo_site_admin/assets/docs/Pasadena_sued_over_redistricting_-_Houston_Chronicle-111314.148120107.pdf

¹¹ http://gulfoastinterfaith.org/yahoo_site_admin/assets/docs/GLO_to_release_some_of_frozen_disaster_money_GDN_John_Wayne_Ferguson_7302012.21060634.pdf;
http://gulfoastinterfaith.org/yahoo_site_admin/assets/docs/Local_advocates_aren%E2%80%99t_the_problem_on_isle_-_The_Galveston_County_Daily_News_Editorials_8213.213182543.pdf

Griffin, and Sullivan Land Services. Ten days later on October 15th a meeting was held between GLO, Mayor Yarbrough and the “Austin Advocates” (Texas Appleaseed and Texas Low Income Housing Information Service). Afterwards a lengthy meeting of the Austin Advocates and Local Advocates was held at the GCI office to discuss a strategy to obtain the fair development of the Northside.

On November 17th members of the Local Advocates became aware that a contract had been approved by the GLO for the distribution of the remaining \$44M and it had been placed on the Galveston city council agenda for approval on November 19th. A request to delay the vote for 60 days was emailed by the Local Advocates to each council member on November 18th and on November 19th during the morning work session the Austin Advocates emailed an objection to the proposed contract vote by the council. The council approved the GLO contract in a 6-1 vote later that day. The Local Advocates requested another meeting and met with Mayor Yarbrough on December 15th where information was requested and another meeting with Mayor Yarbrough was scheduled for January 19th.

Outreach to the 569 families displaced by Ike

Northside Taskforce and GCI leader Pat Toliver attended a GHA meeting on September 28th where GHA Chairman Buddy Herz appeared to criticize the small number of the 569 displaced former residents who have applied for the new mixed income housing recently opened to replace the Cedar Terrace public housing that was destroyed by Hurricane Ike. When she attempted to challenge the statements by Chairman Herz during public comment she was interrupted by Herz and subsequently gaveled to end her comments because time had run out.

On October 20th GCI leader McIntyre met with GHA Director of Operations, Deyna Sims, concerning the treatment of Pat Toliver. They also discussed the illegal application fees that had been imposed upon members of the 569 who desired to apply to the mixed income housing as well as the defective termination notices sent to some of the 569. McIntyre also requested information concerning the outreach effort to the displaced 569 and GHA’s compliance with the Rebuilding

Agreement that had been negotiated by the Austin Advocates, Local Advocates, representatives from GHA and City of Galveston and eventually passed by the Galveston City Council and forwarded to the GLO on September 28, 2012.¹²

POVERTY

At the March 11th Galveston Ministerial Alliance meeting at the B’Nai Israel Temple there was an informal discussion about the growing number of poor people seeking assistance from local congregations, the cause of the increase, and how best to address legitimate need. It was recommended by GCI leader Steve McIntyre that Kenna Kasten, Director of United Way of Galveston, be invited to speak at the next GMA meeting since social agencies may be sharing similar concerns. Kasten met with GMA at its June 10th meeting and participated in a wide ranging discussion about recent changes in the Galveston County Social Services Department, SSBG efforts after Hurricane Ike, and growing poverty in Galveston and Galveston County. Kasten and McIntyre¹³ generally described the 2013 changes in Galveston County social services and the county budget process. It was generally agreed that data needed to be viewed before any action could be contemplated and that viewing a rumored needs assessment of Galveston County by UTMB and the data generated by Galveston County over the last few years should be the first step.

GCI leaders Joe Compian and Steve McIntyre met with Elizabeth Kinard, Director of Catholic Charities, at the GCI office on July 24th concerning the apparent increase in poverty and what might be done to assist families in need.

¹² http://gulfoastinterfaith.org/yahoo_site_admin/assets/docs/Galveston_OKs_housing_plan_at_11th_hour_-_Houston_Chronicle.202112426.pdf

¹³ In 2013 McIntyre served as the appointed public representative on the Galveston County Review Committee for the Financial Assistance Program RFP that created the new program to care for poor residents of Galveston County.

MISCELLANEOUS

The Galveston County Community Watchman published and distributed 2200 copies of its first monthly newspaper in September, 2015. Currently, the primary audience is the African American community in south Galveston County. The member organizations of the GCCO have been asked to submit announcements, articles and pictures.

Ellie Hanley and Joe Compian share information after the Living Wage Conference



Maria Luisa Mercado and Father Maynard Tetreault discuss their assignments shortly before the start of the Living Wage Conference

