



# **ALABAMA APPLESEED ADVOCATE**

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## **ALABAMA APPLESEED IN ACTION IN 2004**

### **SPRING FUNDING APPEAL**

During the first quarter of 2004, we have been actively at work on our advocacy projects. We continue to tackle several important issues.

#### **LANDLORD/TENANT LEGISLATION**

Alabama is one of two states that do not have a modern, up-to-date law regulating the relationship between residential landlords and their tenants. For the past 3-4 years several bills have been introduced in the legislature. However, the competing and conflicting interests of various groups have prevented the passage of any legislation. This year, Alabama Appleseed is trying to be a bridge that can bring these various groups together. We developed a revised bill that we have asked all parties to consider. The consensus we seek has not yet been forged, but we are hopeful that this can be accomplished before the legislature adjourns.

#### **INDIGENT DEFENSE**

Alabama's system of providing attorneys to poor defendants in criminal cases is so decentralized and fragmented that it places poor people in great jeopardy. There are no standards, guidelines or training for attorneys handling indigent cases.

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On February 26, 2004, State Bar President Bill Clark convened a day long symposium in Montgomery on the status of indigent defense. We worked closely with President Clark and his staff to plan and coordinate the symposium. There was a lot of interest and enthusiasm voiced at the symposium. So much so that efforts are now underway to introduce in the legislature a bill to establish a State Indigent Defense Commission, with statewide oversight and supervisory authority. Bill Clark has asked Alabama Appleseed's Executive Director, John Pickens, to work with him and others on this year's legislative effort.

## **STATE JUDICIAL ELECTION REFORM**

This year we will elect three new Supreme Court justices and one Civil Court of Appeals justice. These will be highly partisan and heavily financed elections. Such partisanship and campaign financing is destroying the independence and integrity of our judiciary. We are trying to educate the public about the dangers of continuing on this path. In early March, John Pickens appeared on Alabama Public Television's "For The Record" and his op ed letter was published around the state. We will continue this advocacy as the 2004 judicial races heat up.

## **LIVING WAGE ADVOCACY PROJECTS**

We are continuing our advocacy on living wage issues. We have convened and are coordinating a coalition looking to start a living wage campaign somewhere in the state. This coalition is called the Alabama Economic Justice Coalition. Secondly, we have kicked off our small business/health insurance project looking at why it is so difficult for small businesses to provide health insurance to their employees.

We ask that you consider making a contribution to us as part of our Spring Funding Appeal.

## **WHO WE ARE**

Alabama Appleseed is a non-profit, non-partisan organization founded in 1999 to identify significant needs in the State of Alabama, tackle their root causes, and craft practical, lasting solutions through legal advocacy, community activism, and policy expertise.