

Statement of Congresswoman Shelley Berkley
Subcommittee on Income Security and Family Support
Hearing on Measuring Poverty in America
August 1, 2007

I thank you Mr. Chairman for holding this hearing and I thank the witnesses for their testimony.

Congress oversees many programs that seek to aid our poorest citizens and give them a hand up to better their situation. If we hope to efficiently and effectively target limited resources it is vital that we have poverty measures that accurately reflect where poverty exists and who is experiencing it. The system used currently to determine poverty for the purposes of allocating federal aid such as Food Stamps, S-CHIP, Medicaid and low or no cost school meals has serious shortcomings. Even under this flawed system more than one in ten people in Nevada are living below the poverty line.

The rapid growth in southern Nevada over the last several years has led to an increase in the cost of living in the area, and a notable lack of affordable housing. Factors such as these are not adequately addressed in the current poverty measures. I can tell you that in Las Vegas you would need to earn much more than \$20,650—the current 2007 Federal Poverty Guideline for a family of four—to adequately house, provide transportation, feed, and clothe your family, let alone afford health care and other necessities.

I look forward to hearing the testimony of the witnesses and their recommendations as to how we can improve the current guidelines.