

*The Georgetown Center on Poverty, Inequality, and Public Policy
and the Urban Institute*

**REDUCING POVERTY AND ECONOMIC DISTRESS
AFTER THE AMERICAN RECOVERY AND REINVESTMENT ACT CONFERENCE
January 15, 2010**

Speaker and Author Biographies

Panel I: Weathering Financial Instability and Building Long-Term Security

Wayne Vroman (*Presenter*)

Senior Fellow, Labor, Human Services, and Population Center, Urban Institute

Dr. Vroman, an economist at The Urban Institute since 1977, has directed several Institute research projects. His academic experiences have included positions in two economics departments (Oberlin College and the University of Maryland) and a visiting appointment in the business school at the University of California at Berkeley. He has worked at two federal agencies (the Social Security Administration and the Office of Economic Opportunity) and at the National Commission on State Workmen's Compensation Laws.

Much of Dr. Vroman's research starting with his Ph.D. thesis has been concerned with the economic effects of social insurance. He has conducted projects on the earnings test in the OASDHI program and projects on the incidence of employer payroll taxes. Dr. Vroman's research on workers' compensation includes an examination of the incidence of the employer insurance premiums which finance the program and three studies of permanent partial disabilities. He has also examined numerous issues associated with the provision of unemployment insurance benefits. He has developed an unemployment insurance modeling capability implemented as spreadsheet software and used in analyses of UI funding issues. Models to examine state trust fund solvency and related policy questions have been developed in fifteen states, most recently in Virginia, Montana, Missouri and Ohio. He has authored five books on social insurance topics, *Employment Termination Benefits in the U.S. Economy*, *The Funding Crisis in State Unemployment Insurance*, *Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund Adequacy in the 1990s*, *Topics in Unemployment Insurance Financing* and *Unemployment Compensation Throughout the World: A Comparative Analysis* (with Vera Brusentsev).

Dr. Vroman has investigated several other topics in labor economics such as money wage inflation, union wage contracts, cost-of-living adjustments and incomes policies. The effects of immigration, imports and minimum wages on wage inflation have been studied. He has conducted several analyses of the earnings of black men. These studies have focused on changes in relative earnings since 1964, the effects of transfer payments on labor supply and relative earnings, the effects of industrial change on relative earnings, and the effects of urban central city employment growth on black unemployment. He is co-editor of the 1992 Urban Institute book *Urban Labor Markets and Job Opportunity*.

Dr. Vroman has worked on projects dealing with social protections and labor markets in Western Europe, Eastern Europe, CIS and Asian countries. He has studied worksharing and job creation programs in Germany, Sweden and Belgium. He has worked on World Bank missions to Armenia, Slovakia, Turkmenistan, Kazakstan, Bulgaria, Barbados and Belize; IMF missions to Armenia and Georgia and U.S. AID supported projects in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Kazakstan, Poland, Romania and Ukraine. He developed for the World Bank a simulation model of unemployment benefit payments in CIS countries. He has also authored reports for the World Bank on labor markets and social protection in Turkey and Indonesia.

Barbara Robles (Presenter)

Senior Policy Research Liaison, Board of Governors, Federal Reserve System

Dr. Barbara Robles was recently appointed to the post of Senior Research Liaison with the Consumer and Community Affairs Division, Board of Governors, Federal Reserve System. Prior to accepting the position with the Federal Reserve System, Dr. Robles was at Arizona State University on the faculty in the Center for Community Development and Civil Rights College of Public Programs. She served as Associate Professor in the School of Social Work and as the Coordinator of the Office of Latino Projects & Research. Dr. Robles joined the College of Public Programs at Arizona State University in August 2005.

Dr. Robles received a PhD in Economics with emphasis in Money and Banking and Econometrics from the University of Maryland-College Park. She is the author of *U.S. Latino Families, Heads of Household, and the Elderly: Emerging Trends in Financial Services and Asset-Building Behaviors* (2009), *Financial Services and Product Usage by Latinos in the U.S.* (2007) and a co-author of *The Color of Wealth: The Story Behind the U.S. Racial Wealth Divide* (2006). Formerly, she was a Revenue Estimator for the Joint Committee on Taxation scoring tax legislation for Congress. Her research focuses on Latino wealth inequality, Southwest Border family and community asset building, Latino tax and financial education policies and Latino micro-businesses and entrepreneurship.

John Dorrer (Discussant)

Director, Center for Workforce Research and Information, State of Maine Department of Labor

John Dorrer is an economist and research administrator focused on workforce development, human capital and labor market policies at the state and local level. He is responsible for overseeing the State of Maine's workforce statistics systems for measuring employment, unemployment and labor market developments including forecasting skill requirements and workforce needs. He works closely with Maine employers, industry associations, economic developers and education and training agencies to analyze workforce requirements, trends and developments.

He recently served as Deputy Director, Workforce Development at the National Center on Education and the Economy in Washington, DC where he worked with America's largest cities and leading states to assess policies and practices and to provide technical assistance and consultation. He served as an adjunct faculty member in the Economics Department at the University of Maine. He has consulted to the U.S Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration on labor market information systems development, capacity building and workforce strategies. He spent 20 years in Maine as senior vice president of Training and Development Corporation, a non-profit organization focused on workforce and regional development.

Dorrer holds a BA in Economics and MS in Resource Economics from the University of New Hampshire.

Derek Hyra (Discussant)

Associate Professor in Urban Affairs and Planning, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Derek S. Hyra is an associate professor of Urban Affairs and Planning at Virginia Tech. His research focuses on inner city economic development, with an emphasis on globalization, national housing policy, urban politics, affordable housing finance, neighborhood poverty, and race. Dr. Hyra is the author of *The New Urban Renewal: The Economic Transformation of Harlem and Bronzeville* (University of Chicago Press 2008). He is currently working on his second book, which investigates the topics of race, class, and revitalization in Washington, DC's Shaw/U-Street neighborhood. Dr. Hyra's research has been showcased in both academic journals and popular media outlets, including the British Broadcasting Corporation, Chicago Public Radio, The New York Times, and The Washington Post.

Prior to joining Virginia Tech, he worked at the U.S. Department of the Treasury, investigating the predictors and consequences of the subprime lending crisis, and at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, where he examined the community-level impact of national urban legislation, such as the Community Development Block Grant, the Empowerment Zones, and the HOPE VI program.

A former resident fellow of Harvard University's W.E.B. Du Bois Institute, Dr. Hyra has taught at the University of Chicago, Brown University, and the George Washington University. He is also a research affiliate of the National Poverty Center, an affiliated scholar of the Urban Institute, and a commissioner of the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority. He received his B.A. from Colgate University and his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago.

Margaret Simms (Panel Chair)

Institute Fellow, Urban Institute

Margaret C. Simms is an Institute Fellow at the Urban Institute in Washington, D.C., where she directs the Low Income Working Families project. Prior to joining the Urban Institute in July 2007, she was a Vice President at the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. Dr. Simms has held academic appointments at Atlanta University and the University of California at Santa Cruz. She has edited many books and monographs on black economic well-being, and has written extensively on issues of employment and training, education, income and poverty, and minority business development. Dr. Simms served as editor of the *Review of Black Political Economy* from 1983 to 1988. She is an elected member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and currently serves on the National Research Council Committee on the Fiscal Future of the United States. She received her PhD in Economics from Stanford University.