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THE UNHEARD THIRD 2011: The Job Crisis and Low-Income New Yorkers: Impact and Implications for 2013 City Elections

New York, NY, November 30, 2011 —A third of low-income New Yorkers reported someone in their household had their wages, hours or tips reduced, lost their jobs, or both last year. Low-income New Yorkers also lost ground when it comes to workplace benefits such as health care and paid sick leave compared to pre-recession levels. Many New Yorkers who are unemployed and actively looking for work have suffered prolonged joblessness.

These are among the findings of *The Unheard Third 2011*, the Community Service Society's annual survey of low-income opinion. Overall, New Yorkers put job creation (47 percent) at the top of their political agenda while investing in education came in second (35 percent). A solid majority of New Yorkers are willing to personally pay more in taxes to support city-funded programs designed to improve high school graduation rates or provide opportunities for young people to get their diploma or GED. And despite the prevailing view held by many politicians that cutting business taxes and regulations will spur the economy, New Yorkers by a three to one margin prefer a mayor who supports policies that help working New Yorkers get ahead over policies that make the city more attractive to business. (See attachment)

"Clearly, the public does not buy the argument that more give-aways to business is the way to stimulate jobs and turn this dismal economy around," said David R. Jones, President and CEO of the Community Service Society. "Low-income New Yorkers are hurting and pessimistic about their future given the current jobless recovery. They have lost their jobs, their earnings have gone down or they are worried about losing their job in the year ahead. The resounding message for politicians is simple: you bailed out Wall Street, now help those who really need it."

The Unheard Third 2011 was conducted by the national polling firm Lake Research Partners for the Community Service Society (CSS), from July 5 to July 31, 2011. It surveyed 1,419 New York City adults, including a sample of moderate and higher income residents, with a margin of error of plus or minus 2.6 percentage points. The poll reveals some of the extraordinary hardships and challenges poor and low-income New Yorkers face on a daily basis.

A group that was particularly hard hit was single mothers who have among the highest poverty rates in the city (41.1 percent). For example, a third of low-income single mothers reported going hungry because of not enough money to buy food, nearly half fell behind on their rent, and 38 percent could not fill a needed prescription.

Of the low-income unemployed who say they are actively looking for work, more than half have been out of work for a year or more. Low expectations that job prospects would improve was also apparent from the poll, with more than half of low-income New Yorkers fearing that someone in their household will be out of work in the next year. Nearly half of the low-income New Yorkers who lost their jobs, had hours reduced or saw their wages go down reported falling behind on their rent or mortgage. Forty-three percent reported going without health insurance.

“There are real consequences to ignoring the economic hardships experienced by so large a segment of our population,” said Nancy Rankin, founder of the *Unheard Third* and CSS Vice President for Policy, Research and Advocacy. “Of particular concern are those who have been out of work for long periods, and young people with little education. These two groups run the greatest risk of being permanently left behind.”

The Unheard Third is partially-funded through the support of The New York Community Trust. It offers a unique snapshot of the policy preferences and experiences of low-income New Yorkers. CSS has used the survey to inform and guide its research, direct service programs and policy recommendations. It has served to narrow the focus of the agency’s agenda on the working poor and reinforce its belief that public policy aimed at this population must, in part, be guided by the life experiences and ideas of New Yorkers living in poverty.

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For more than 165 years, the Community Service Society of New York has been the leading voice on behalf of low-income New Yorkers and continues to advocate for the economic security of the working poor in the nation’s largest city.