

## Current Issues Monitoring Report For the week ending May 9, 2008

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### **Economy**

Federal data shows that welfare caseloads are up about 0.6% since 2007. For the past ten years, welfare rolls decreased by about 68% because of new federal laws enacted in the 1990s that imposed work requirements and also restricted the length of time recipients could receive help. Citing downturns in the local tourist economy, **Florida** and **Nevada** are among the first states to see their welfare rolls increase.

[http://www.usatoday.com/printedition/news/20080505/1a\\_lede05.art.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/printedition/news/20080505/1a_lede05.art.htm)

A columnist at the **Austin** [Texas] American Statesman did a piece this week on the various measures nonprofits are using to survive the sluggish economy. A local food bank has begun to substitute more affordable - but equally nutritious - options to its clients. For instance, instead of canned tuna at \$1.63 per pound, they're substituting ground turkey which costs \$.99 per pound. Lutheran Social Services is now renting cars instead of paying mileage to its employees. As an example, a trip to and from Corpus Christi would cost the organization \$220 in mileage but it only costs \$35 per day to rent a mid-size car. Even if they have to fill the gas tank twice, they'd still save money.

<http://www.statesman.com/news/content/news/stories/local/05/04/0504philanthropy.html>

### **Domestic Partner Benefits**

The voter-approved ban on gay marriage prevents the state from providing insurance coverage to domestic partners, ruled the **Michigan** Supreme Court this week. The court ruled 5 to 2 that the language of the constitutional amendment makes it clear that the union of a man and a woman is the only agreement recognized as marriage "for any purpose." The majority on the court said the "for any purpose" language makes state provided-benefits to domestic partners unlawful. Dissenting justices argue that the backers of the amendment only meant to prohibit gay marriage, not take away employment benefits.

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/chi-ap-mi-samesex-benefits,0.5927405.print.story>

### **In Other News...**

Megachurches have begun to hire development directors to work full time on church fundraising. Experts say that donations to churches in 2006 constitute nearly one third of all tax-deductible giving in the US and will only increase as more churches hire professional help to fund capital campaigns, and other expansion projects.

<http://crainsdetroit.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080505/SUB/298077774/-1>