

December 05

PIA INAUGURATES RELATIONSHIP WITH CONGRESSIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

PIA now has a National Strategy Team which has been researching the effects of federal laws and budget cuts on our local issues. The areas of research include:

- Finding federal revenue resources to support the creation of affordable housing
- Increasing federal commitment to healthcare access for the uninsured
- Reforming the federal approach to public education, especially in support of small alternative schools
- Renewing federal commitment to increasing community policing resources to high crime urban areas
- Building federal commitment to protect the unification of families in the immigration system.

This effort to bring federal resources to bear on local issues is coordinated with PICO's national network, through which 50 PICO-affiliated organizations in seventeen states are uniting. The PICO national campaign is called **New Voices**.

Out of this broad, grassroots research across the country, we and our sister PICO affiliates expect to reach a united platform in the next year to achieve specific solutions to help solve the problems our communities share. To date, PICO organizations across the nation have held twenty assemblies with congressional representatives. 10,000 faith leaders have met in town-hall style forums to publicly share their research and to ask for a partnership towards solutions and new priorities in congress.

When this round of **New Voices** assemblies wraps up in March 2005, approximately 20,000 people of faith, united by PICO, will have met with 65 United States senators and congressional representatives to seek support on shared concerns. PIA's National Team is in the process of planning a public meeting with the members of congress who represent the Peninsula area.

Community organizing for change on a national level is very new for PIA and other PICO organizations, requiring a lot of learning, but full of promise for improving the lives of people in our communities.