

Detroit residents line up for housing assistance

“Most people out here have been unemployed for months”

Andre Damon
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Tens of thousands of people waited for hours Wednesday in downtown Detroit to get applications for housing assistance. The turnout overwhelmed the event's planners, who thought no more than several thousand people would attend. Reporters from the *World Socialist Web Site* spoke to people attending the event at Cobo Hall.

"I was waiting in line for hours before I learned that this program is not for people from my neighborhood," said Jackie Hall, a resident of Harper Woods, a nearby city.

"This is the worst-organized event I've ever seen," she added. "People are doing a double wrap-around of Cobo Hall. Why? So they can fill out an application for help that won't get them anything? A lot of my neighbors have their lights off, their gas off. My son just graduated high school, but he has a disability. What chance does he have for getting a job?"

Jalonda Terry, a former student and restaurant worker, said her unemployment had run out, and she has nowhere to turn, so she came to Cobo Hall for help. "They're talking about extending unemployment for another 13 weeks," she said, "but that's nothing. Most people out here have been unemployed for months and won't find any work soon."

"People are going to be starving and homeless," she added. "People are going to die. Why doesn't the president just give every family stimulus money. Why do we have to wait in the cold? Why do we have to fill out these stupid forms?"

Jalonda's mother, Kadeja, said, "There should be people helping to organize the line. There are kids here in the cold."

Angella Murphy, a former GM worker, related

cutbacks in the city to concessions by workers at Chrysler. "They're closing all the schools down, and now they're cutting optical and dental benefits from the auto workers. Obama gave all that money to the banks and not to the people. Why doesn't he start a job-creation program?"

"Obama's doing his best," said one person in the crowd. "He gave everybody hope."

"You can't eat hope," someone shouted back, and a debate ensued.

Rosalyn Black said, "Nowadays, people are moving in together just to survive. We need the money, but the banks get it. Why don't they just help us? Why do we have to come out and walk around Cobo Hall like it's a circus?"

Sigolwide Aremo, a business owner, complained loudly to a police officer standing by the line, but didn't get any response. The officer pointed to one of our reporters, saying, "Here is somebody that will hear you out."

She told us that she had been standing in line for hours just like everybody else. "Nobody should have to stand out here. This is just shoddy and disordered. It could have been done online much more efficiently. There are elderly people here, people in wheelchairs here. There are children. And there's nobody here to help," she said. "People out here are cold; I'm cold, but what choice do we have?"

"This is not what the president intended," she added. "The mayor is responsible for this."

Ms. Solomon, a former factory worker and UPS security person, said her unemployment had run out. "There are no jobs in the city, and no way to get out of it for people looking for work," she said. "Dave Bing

[Detroit mayor] is rich, he doesn't need to ride the bus. But he's cutting the bus services that people need to get to work."

Annette, a former AT&T worker, said, "I have been unemployed since March and I can't make ends meet. My income has fallen by more than half, and I am stretching everything I have, but I can't pay all of my bills. I heard that they were providing \$3,000 in help with your bills, so I came down. You can see from all of the people who are here, people are really hurting. We all need help."

Lila Scott worked at Greektown Casino before getting laid off. "I'm getting desperate. Although I have been laid off for several months, my unemployment has not kicked in, and I have three children. I have tried for months to get it started, but I keep getting the run-around. Obama, Bing, [Governor] Granholm, none of these people are doing anything for working people."

"Things will get even worse once winter rolls around and people can't pay their utility bills," said Ricardo, an unemployed worker. "There are going to be a lot of dead people this winter," he said. "What do you do when you can't find a job and your baby's stomach hurts? What do you do?"



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