

# Projo Politics Blog

## Poverty Institute's budget session draws hundreds

**Jan 15, 2009**

**By Steve Peoples**

A "Budget Rhode Map" session hosted by Rhode Island College's Poverty Institute attracted more than 200 people this morning to Rhodes-on-the-Pawtuxet.

It was the second consecutive year that the progressive advocacy organization hosted such an event, which was aimed at encouraging like-minded people to influence the budget battle currently underway on Smith Hill.

The featured speakers included Russell Dannecker, a former Senate Fiscal Advisor who is now a Poverty Institute fiscal policy analyst; Department of Revenue Director Gary Sasse, and Jeff McLynch, of Washington's Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy.

The crowd was full of State House regulars: several representatives from non-profit groups, organized labor, the National Organization for Women and the attorney general's office. We couldn't help but notice the Rev. Bernard A. Healey, the lobbyist for the local Catholic diocese.

We would have loved to have stayed for the lunch speaker, but had to skip out early. Former Journal columnist M. Charles Bakst was scheduled to deliver a speech called "Stirring the conscious: Making people's voices heard at the State House."

He slipped us a copy of his remarks on our way out.

"The fight to stir people's conscience begins with facts, the kind of ammunition you have been gathering this morning," Bakst said in the prepared remarks. "It continues by speaking truth to power."

"Over decades spent observing the State House, especially the legislature, it seemed to me that victories on budgets or anything else depended on who was better organized and most persistent -- not just who had the stronger case but who was more effective at putting that case across."