

CBPP Announces Sharon Parrott as New President

Founder Robert Greenstein Steps Down After 40 Years

The Board of Directors of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP), a research and policy institute that informs and shapes federal and state policies to reduce poverty, promote equity, and build opportunity, announced today that it has named Sharon Parrott as the organization's next President. Parrott, currently CBPP's Senior Vice President for Federal Policy and Program Development, has held several positions at the Center over nearly three decades and served in the Obama Administration at the Office of Management and Budget and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). She will succeed Robert Greenstein, who established the Center in 1981 and has served as its chief executive ever since, on January 1, 2021.

"The Center is one of the nation's most influential organizations in shaping domestic policy, and Sharon will build on its four decades of achievement to lead it to new heights of effectiveness and impact," said Kenneth Apfel, CBPP Board Chairman and former Social Security Commissioner. "She's a strong leader with a vision for promoting economic and racial equity, deep expertise both inside and outside government, and the ability to get things done."

"I am incredibly honored to be entrusted with carrying forward this organization and leading our exceptional team, whom I care so deeply about," said Parrott. "By building on our strengths and deepening our partnerships, we can help foster policy change that will make ours a more just nation, where every child can thrive regardless of zip code, race, ethnicity, gender, or immigration status; where everyone can afford food, shelter, and health coverage; and where workers earn fair wages, can meet their families' caregiving needs, and get adequate support when they lose their jobs."

In her current role at the Center, Parrott directs the organization's federal policy work, including the need for robust COVID relief measures to address hardship and strengthen the economy. She helps facilitate work across budget, tax, and low-income program policy, always with an eye toward how to use policies to reduce poverty and promote opportunity and equity across lines of race, ethnicity, gender, geography, and immigration status. She also holds significant organizational responsibilities in areas such as fundraising, partner relations, and overall management.

"At a moment in our nation's history that holds both daunting challenges and significant opportunity, Sharon Parrott is uniquely poised to lead the Center forward," said CBPP President Greenstein. "In many years of working closely with Sharon, I've seen up close her deep policy expertise, her brilliance, and her

unwavering commitment to the Center’s mission of bettering the lives of people all across the country who, despite our nation’s affluence, have too little. With Sharon at the helm and the Center’s deeply talented and dedicated staff, I am confident the Center will continue to make a powerful difference for many years to come in the lives of millions of struggling families and individuals.”

“Sharon is one of the nation’s most well-respected advocates,” said Rebecca Dixon, executive director of the National Employment Law Project. “She has a keen understanding of how to advance racial equity and marshal support for people and communities in need in federal, state, and local budget processes. Her knowledge is deep, her passion is commendable. We look forward to our continued work with CBPP under Sharon’s exceptional leadership.”

Parrott has held several positions in executive branch agencies over the past two decades. Most recently, in 2016-17 she was an Associate Director at the Office of Management and Budget, where she had budget and oversight responsibilities for the Departments of Labor and Education, the Social Security Administration, the human services programs at HHS, and the nutrition programs at the Department of Agriculture.

“I have worked with Sharon both inside and outside of government, and I have long admired how she applies experience, skill, creativity and empathy to the work of making the country a more fair and equitable place,” said Cecilia Muñoz, Vice President at New America and Director of the White House Domestic Policy Council under President Obama.

In 2009-12, Parrott served as Secretary Kathleen Sebelius’ Counselor for Human Services Policy at HHS, where her portfolio included early education, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), child welfare, community supports for seniors and people with disabilities, the intersection of health reform and human services issues, refugee resettlement, and the HHS program that cares for unaccompanied children who cross the border into the United States. And in 1999-2000, she was detailed to the District of Columbia’s Department of Human Services, where she served as a Senior Policy Advisor on TANF, Food Stamps, and Medicaid issues.

“Sharon is driven by her compassion for those who are struggling and her deeply held belief that everyone should be able to meet basic needs — a roof overhead, food on the table, affordable health care — and have the opportunity to thrive,” said Sebelius. “While many people say that they will fight as hard for all families as they do for their own, I watched Sharon do just that, making her uniquely qualified as an advocate. Her tireless work to advance these values made her an excellent public servant and make her an excellent choice to lead the Center.”

Since founding the Center, Greenstein spearheaded its growth from an organization of four staff in its first year to 150 today. Among its major accomplishments, the Center played a leading role in spearheading every major expansion of the federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) for low-income working people in the last three decades; in persuading policymakers to create and then expand the low-income portion of the Child Tax Credit; in helping shape various coverage and cost-containment provisions of the Affordable Care Act; in expanding SNAP (food stamps) and other key nutrition programs to more needy people; and in crafting major parts of the 2009 Recovery Act to help the economy recover from the Great Recession and reduce hardship for millions of struggling families.

The Center also co-founded and continues to coordinate the State Priorities Partnership, a network of state-based policy organizations in 43 states that shapes state policies to reduce poverty, advance equity, and promote inclusive economies. By combining top-notch analysis, deep community partnerships, powerful narratives, and strategic advocacy campaigns to move policy change, the network has helped secure or protect \$50 billion in annual state revenues over the last five years to fund investments in health, education, and other key priorities, and it has helped persuade 29 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico to create their own state-level EITCs, among many other achievements.

“For forty years, Bob has directed the Center with deep passion, extraordinary vision, and strategic brilliance,” said Apfel. “He built the Center from a shoestring operation at its start into a policy powerhouse. For his many years of work to reduce poverty and inequality in sustainable ways, and to expand equity and opportunity, the nation owes him a debt of gratitude.”

In recent years, the Center has been engaged in an organization-wide initiative to incorporate racial equity more fully into its work and organizational culture. This includes prioritizing organizational diversity and inclusion, bringing racial equity more explicitly into its research and policy analysis, and deepening partnerships with organizations that focus on achieving justice with and for marginalized communities.

“I’ve worked for years alongside Sharon and CBPP in defending federal programs for families struggling to make ends meet,” said Dorian Warren, president of Community Change. “She brings deep expertise on the multitude of issues affecting low-income families and especially low-income families of color in America and the coalitional and leadership skills necessary to lead the Center — both externally and internally — in this next period of American governance. I very much look forward to working in partnership with Sharon and her team to advance an agenda of economic security and racial and gender justice that will transform the lives of millions of families who deserve to live with dignity, security, and opportunity.”

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The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization and policy institute that conducts research and analysis on a range of government policies and programs. It is supported primarily by foundation grants.