

Poverty session lacked solutions

I attended an Oct. 13 discussion, moderated by Joe Moore of Valley Public Radio, about ending poverty in Fresno. I left the event frustrated by the public-relations spin void of real solutions.

Many of Fresno's impoverished are underemployed or sick. The local economy is not working for the poor. Fresno has the second-highest U.S. poverty rate. In 2010, Fresno's poverty rate for all persons was at 24.9 percent. Since 2010, the poverty trend in Fresno has steadily risen: 2011: 25.9 percent, 2012: 27.5 percent and in 2013: 28.9 percent, according to the U.S. Census.

While the 2008 economic collapse exacerbated Fresno's poverty woes, ineffectual local leadership also bears responsibility for failing to stem the tide of runaway poverty. Ashley Swearingin's mayoral tenure corresponds to Fresno's widening economic inequality.

Help is on the way, but is it too little too late? California's minimum wage will rise to \$9 in mid-2014, and to \$10 in 2016. But let's be honest: \$10 an hour in a part-time service industry job will not lift a family out of poverty. Support leaders (and policies) who are not afraid to push for fair wages and who will bring jobs to Fresno that are more than service industry work.

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