

### Acting for Justice

It may well be that at this crucial time in our country, the best action we can take is to make an honest effort to obtain as much factual information as we can in preparation to vote. The following web sites may be helpful. Public libraries would also have these materials.

### Regulatory Changes

[www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov) This U.S. government website resource for finding proposed rules, reviewing them and commenting on them.

[Washington Post](http://www.washingtonpost.com) [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com)

*Bush Forces A Shift in Regulatory Thrust*, Sunday, August 15, 2004, page A1

*Nuts and Bolts of Rulemaking — an Analysis*. August 15, 2004. Page A14

*Appalachia Is Paying Price for White House Rule Change*. Tuesday, August 17, 2004 Page A1

[New York Times](http://www.nytimes.com) [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com) *Out of the Spotlight, Bush Overhauls Nation's Regulations*. Saturday, August 15, 2004. A1 and A10

[www.nrdc.org](http://www.nrdc.org) National Resources Defense Council Press Release. Feb. 27, 2004.

*Bush Mercury Policy Threatens the Health of Women and Children*

[www.epa.gov/mercury](http://www.epa.gov/mercury). Environmental Protection Agency web site about mercury.

### The U.S. Debt

[www.publicdebt.treas.gov](http://www.publicdebt.treas.gov) Click on FAQs, frequently asked questions for explanations.

### Journalism

[www.cjr.org](http://www.cjr.org) Columbia Journalism Review. An outstanding resource on the media.

[www.fair.org](http://www.fair.org) Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting. Excellent resource to check facts.

### Civil Rights

<http://usinfo.state.gov/usa/infousa/facts/funddocs/billeng.htm> The Bill of Rights

<http://www.epic.org/privacy/terrorism/hr3162.htm>. The Patriot Act.

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**CREA is a faith-based independent 501(c)3 organization.**



***"Believing that the earth is home to all, CREA facilitates analysis of human, social and economic policies from the perspective of their effects on human lives, beginning with the lives of those who are poor."***

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"The Campaign '04 information war is fast, deep and fraught with lies. The press must rethink its coverage, or drown in a toxic tidal wave."

Bryan Keefer.  
*Tsunami*.  
Columbia Journalism Review.  
July/August 2004.



CREA

# Starting Points

Center for Reflection, Education and Action, Inc. Hartford, CT

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## FINDING THE REAL U.S. ELECTION ISSUES

U.S. citizens have a daunting task when searching for truthful, balanced and accurate sources to assist us in making informed and responsible decisions in the 2004 presidential election. We are engulfed in words and images appealing to particular class, racial, and religious sensibilities, and attitudes toward education and geographic stereotypes. We must be alert to the skill with which political strategists manipulate human emotions and the media to achieve their purposes.

The real issues facing our nation transcend political party, and deserve serious consideration if we wish to keep our pluralistic democracy and uphold the constitution we cherish. We must ask ourselves hard questions.

- ◇ **War and Terrorism.** Has a legitimate fear of terrorist attacks led us to be realistic and intelligent in our personal, national and international responses? Has our emotion at times been manipulated for other, diverse purposes? Who bears the human and financial cost of our wars? Why is our country so reviled? What positive steps can be taken?
- ◇ **Civil Rights.** Have the constitutionally guaranteed rights of U.S. citizens been respected and promoted? How have the Patriot Act and other forms of domestic security regulation affected these rights? Is the right to dissent protected? What is the foundation of security?
- ◇ **Inter-generational Responsibility.** Do we recognize our responsibilities to future generations, the national debt we are incurring, the environmental degradation we are accepting, and the kinds of human, agricultural and military scientific experimentation we are endorsing?
- ◇ **Global Economic Changes.** Do we recognize the enormous changes in our world's economic systems resulting from developments in technology, communication and transportation? As a society are we making rational plans to adjust to these changes? Do we take an informed and active role in creating a just national and global economic order?
- ◇ **Journalistic Responsibility.** Have we demanded of our media a return to their responsibilities within a democracy to investigate events and to inform the public of the truth as it is uncovered? We cannot protect our environment, ensure the viability of our economic security, and participate in a globally inter-dependent world without accurate and honest sources of information.

We need to reflect, to search out facts, and to share them with each other. We cannot afford to sit back and be complacent or indifferent. Too much is at stake.

## U.S. Regulatory Power Has Long Reach

One of the powers of the executive branch of government is to set the regulations that implement legislation. This power has historically been used to advance or to undermine the intent of the legislation.

On the one side regulations are seen as intrusive, unfunded mandates costly to operations. On the other, they are seen as essential protections of public and environmental well-being. In the recent past, deregulation has gained in many economic sectors, and revised regulations set in others.

All proposed regulatory changes are posted in the *Federal Register*. Most of us are unaware of them, unless we belong to an organization that alerts us to a change.

Yet these regulations affect our lives, and it is important to have some grasp of how an administration is setting regulations, especially as we prepare for elections.

In August the Washington Post and the New York Times both published a series of very informative articles.

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### This Issue

*Election Issues*  
*China Project Statement*  
*El Salvador Report*  
*U.S. Overtime Regulations*  
*Speaking in the Light*

*Order Forms: El Salvador Report*  
*Free Trade Holiday Gifts*  
*Christmas Cards*

## PUBLIC STATEMENT REGARDING COLLABORATIVE PROJECT IN CHINA

McDonald's Corporation and The Walt Disney Company have joined together with a group of faith-based and socially responsible institutional investors to carry out a unique project that seeks to promote sustained compliance with labor standards mandated by their codes of conduct for manufacturers.

For many years, both companies have maintained strict codes of conduct for their licensees and manufacturers. These codes address a range of key labor rights issues including the prohibition of forced and child labor and the setting of requirements in such areas as health



Workers in China assemble toys that will reach children in many parts of the world. Photo by R. Rosenbaum. © CREA Inc. 2004

and safety, working hours, compensation and compliance with applicable laws. In addition, both companies have been active in undertaking educational, monitoring and remediation efforts to promote compliance with these codes at the factories where their products are sourced throughout the world.

The project has been launched as part of an ongoing effort to strengthen the effectiveness of these labor standards by drawing on the interest and expertise of interested investor organizations and jointly exploring means of promoting 'sustained compliance' with labor codes. This collaborative project seeks to foster the creation and testing of internal systems within factories in order to promote such compliance over time, including enhanced training and education for management, supervisors and workers and potential positive compliance incentives. The project will also seek methods of encouraging remediation in facilities that demonstrate significant compliance issues, in order to minimize circumstances in which factory termination is the only business alternative.

In pursuing the project the group will work with both local nongovernmental organizations and governmental authorities, as well as individual factories, with the goal of developing practicable implementation approaches, including training and remediation methods and tools. The group's broad objective is to identify effective practices that can be applied across different industries, geographic regions and socio-economic and regulatory systems. The participants anticipate completion of the project over the next 18 months and plan to report periodically on project progress and results.

The project has grown out of the mutual concerns discussed during the extended dialogue among the investor group and the two companies regarding ways to improve conditions in factories on a sustained basis.

The investor group participating in the project includes representatives from As You Sow Foundation; the Center for Reflection, Education and Action (CREA); the Connecticut State Treasurer's Office (fiduciary for the Connecticut Retirement Plans and Trust Funds); Domini Social Investments; the General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits of the United Methodist Church; the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR); and the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

## EL SALVADOR SUSTAINABLE LIVING WAGE-INCOME PROJECT REPORT COMPLETED

CREA staff recently completed the printed report *El Salvador Sustain-Ability: Sustainable Living Wage/Income Research Project*. Field research for the report was conducted in El Salvador by Aida Montalvo and Karla Montalvo under the direction of Sister Ruth Rosenbaum, TC, PhD.

Based on the foundation of the universal human rights and scientifically established criteria for meeting human needs, CREA articulates standards for meeting those human needs. Using actual pricing data from field research, the report makes clear the level of wages/income required to meet them. The report then reveals the percentage of that level currently achieved through the income of maquila workers, craft artisans, and coffee farmers.