The Organizing Apprenticeship Project (OAP) presented findings last week from the 2008 Minnesota Legislative Report Card on Racial Equity evaluating the Governor and state legislature on key legislation effecting communities of color.

Though the legislature and Governor as a whole received a failing grade, State Sen. Sandy Pappas, DFL-St. Paul, was named a champion for racial equity for her personal efforts in addressing racial equity legislation. “Racial and economic inequities in areas such as education, employment and health in Minnesota are among the most serious long-term economic and moral challenges we face,” said Jermaine Toney, OAP lead policy analyst and report card author. “Even in hard times we must work for equity - by looking at the impact of budget decisions, investments, and policies on racial and economic disparities in our state.”

Pappas was named a champion for sponsoring, co-sponsoring and supporting legislation in 2008 which the report found would have had a positive impact on racial disparities in education, health or the economic status of communities of color. Key trends in the report include: Overall, the legislature passed and Governor signed only 47 percent of the bills studied, down from 62 percent one year ago. There were 101 legislators listed as champions or on the racial justice honor roll in 2008, a significant increase over 2007.

The racial justice champion and honor roll cuts across geography, party affiliation and racial groups. “While racial disparities are pervasive in Minnesota, they need not be permanent,” said Pappas. “It is important for all of us to look to solutions that lead for equity and opportunity in our state, and it is important that we continue to promote racial and economic equity whenever and however we can - our future depends on it.”

The 2008 Legislative Report Card on Racial Equity and new tools for assessing the impact of budget and policy decisions on communities of color, American Indian and lower income communities are available on line at www.oaproject.org. For more information, Jermaine Toney, of the Organizing Apprenticeship Project (OAP) may be contacted at (612) 746-4224.