

Religious and Faith-Based Leaders/Organizations Open Letter to the U.S. Senate

February 28, 2011

Dear Senator:

As religious and faith-based organization leaders, we are extremely concerned about the disproportionate cuts to life-saving and cost-effective programs in the Fiscal Year 2011 spending measure passed by the House of Representatives. The cuts reverse broad bipartisan support behind these programs and jeopardize lives across the world. **Our faith tradition calls on us and our governments to care “for the least of these”, to “feed the hungry”, and to “act justly.”** Investments in programs that fight disease, combat extreme poverty, and alleviate suffering reflect not only America’s values, but also demonstrate American leadership.

The federal deficit is of genuine concern to all of us, and we understand that tough choices and sacrifices must be made. We urge you to take bold steps to bring spending and revenue in line, focusing particularly on the major budget categories and tax policies that add the most to our deficit. We believe **it is morally unacceptable that the deepest cuts have targeted programs that are saving lives and investing in our own national security.**

The spending cuts to the international humanitarian assistance accounts are more than double the reductions to the overall bill. Given the fact that these accounts represent less than ½ of 1 percent of the total federal budget, the cuts will have very modest value in balancing the budget. Instead they will have an immediate and devastating impact on the world’s poorest. For example, the cuts proposed to international food assistance will mean 15 million fewer people will receive food. **These cuts reflect misdirected priorities and will cause the proliferation of preventable disease, extreme poverty and loss of life.**

Cuts proposed in the House of Representatives’ budget resolution include slashing U.S. food aid programs by 41 percent (\$687 million), Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance funding by 67 percent (\$875 million), development assistance by 30 percent (\$747 million), refugee programs by 45 percent (\$827 million), global health and childhood survival programs by 15 percent (\$365 million), all from FY 2010 enacted levels.

Of great concern is the 10 percent cut to the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief and the proposed \$450 million cut in contributions to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis, which would mean that approximately:

- **10.4 million bed nets to fight malaria will not be provided;**
- **6 million treatments for malaria will not be administered;**
- **3.7 million people will not be tested for HIV;**
- **58,286 HIV-positive, pregnant women will not receive treatment to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV;**
- **414,000 people will not be provided their antiretroviral (HIV/AIDS) medication;**
and
- **372,000 cases of testing and treatment of tuberculosis will be halted.**

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Many religious communities in the United States played an instrumental role in fostering the bipartisan consensus that ultimately led to the passage of global AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria legislation in 2003 and 2008. Collectively, our organizations and churches represent millions of donors, supporters, congregants and members active within every Congressional district in the country. We write to you as leaders of these communities, which have continued to support both private and governmental funding for these diseases and other humanitarian accounts, and are now deeply concerned with the proposed cuts.

We strongly encourage the Senate to restore funding to these critical and cost-effective programs. Funding for these programs should not come at the expense of domestic poverty programs. As the Senate faces the tough job of restoring fiscal responsibility in Washington, we strongly urge you to understand that **smart and responsible investments that save millions of lives and help stabilize areas of great strategic and security interests to the United States are the very programs we should prioritize.**

Sincerely yours,

Richard Stearns
President
World Vision

Sheila Nix
US Executive Director
ONE Campaign

Leith Anderson
President
National Association of Evangelicals

Dave Evans
President
Food for the Hungry

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