

FEBRUARY 10-13



WASHINGTON, DC

Protecting Human Life and Dignity in the Year of Faith **A Catholic Message to Congress:**

*Responsible Deficit Reduction Must Include a "Circle of Protection"
for Poor and Vulnerable People*

Welcome the Stranger and Pass Comprehensive Immigration Reform

Protecting Poor and Vulnerable People in Deficit Reduction

Every day in every corner of the world, the Catholic Church--Catholic Charities, the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, Catholic Relief Services, and thousands of schools, hospitals, parishes and NGOs--works to draw a "Circle of Protection" around the "least of these."

The federal government is a vital partner in that work, and the federal budget is an important tool. Congress has a responsibility to reduce federal deficits and improve our fiscal health, but must do so in ways that give moral priority to programs that help people living in poverty, both at home and abroad.

Domestic

Despite a record-high number of 46 million Americans living in poverty and about 12 million unemployed workers, effective programs that fight poverty are threatened by sequestration and further annual cuts.

Congress must protect **affordable housing and community development programs**, which greatly helped to reduce poverty in 2011. The unmet need for stable, affordable housing, especially among families, is too great.

Over 16 million children live in food-insecure households. **SNAP; Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); School Lunches; and other food assistance programs** must similarly be protected to eliminate the scourge of hunger.

We understand increased health care costs are major drivers of the nation's long-term fiscal challenge, and adjustments will be needed over time. **Medicare** can be reformed in ways that do not harm those who depend on the health care coverage it provides, especially seniors with modest means. Any savings in **Medicaid** should avoid changes that harm low-income beneficiaries either directly, by cutting benefits or eligibility, or indirectly by shifting costs to states.

Our economy simply is not creating a sufficient amount of decent jobs. Congress can support decent job creation by protecting **workforce development programs**.

Programs that promote health, including **child and maternal health initiatives and community health centers**, are vital supports for some of the most vulnerable Americans.

International

1. Preserve and strengthen funding for poverty-focused development and humanitarian accounts that save lives and reduce crushing poverty in the Fiscal Year 2013 and 2014 budgets. The Senate and the House passed very different FY 2013 appropriations bills. We support the higher Senate version that proposes \$19 billion for international poverty-focused accounts. [See accompanying chart.] These accounts must be protected from sequestration cuts or reductions from deliberations on future budgets. This assistance is about one-half percent (0.6%) of the federal budget.

The plight of refugees fleeing Syria and Iraq and the food insecurity and conflict in Mali and drought stricken areas of Africa are grim reminders of the lives at stake. Among these poverty-focused accounts, Congress must adequately fund **International Disaster Assistance and Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance**.

Outside of these priority poverty-focused accounts, cuts to other parts of the broader International Assistance budget must not harm the poorest persons and communities, e.g. in the Economic Support Fund, **assistance for South Sudan and Haiti** should remain.

2. Urge the House Foreign Affairs Committee leadership to release the hold on FY 2012 assistance to the Palestinian people so they can address humanitarian needs, reduce economic desperation, and strengthen their capacity to build institutions for a future state. The \$500 million in assistance is in the best interests of both Israelis and Palestinians who need a two-state solution to the longstanding conflict, a secure and recognized Israel living in peace alongside a viable and independent Palestinian state.

Comprehensive Immigration Reform

Path to citizenship for the undocumented: a program which provides an opportunity for the undocumented residing in the United States to earn permanent residency and eventual citizenship. “Earned” citizenship should be achievable and independently verifiable.

Future Flow Worker Program: Worker program which includes:

- Optional path to citizenship which is achievable/verifiable;
- Family unity which allows immediate family members to join worker;
- Job portability which allows workers to change employers;
- Enforcement mechanisms and resources to enforce worker’s rights;
- Living-wage protections;
- Mobility between U.S. and homeland and within U.S.; and
- Labor-market test to ensure U.S. workers are not harmed

Family-Based Immigration Reform: the family-based system should be reformed to reduce current backlogs in family categories, reallocate unused visas, reclassify the spouses and minor children of legal permanent residents as immediate relatives, and provide humanitarian consideration and waivers for families who are separated.

Restoration of Due Process Protections: provisions which restore due process protections lost in the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) which separate families, including repeal of the 3 and 10-year bars and restoration of judicial discretion in deportation proceedings. One-year filing deadline on asylum applications should be eliminated. Community-based alternatives to detention programs should be authorized.

Address the Root Causes of Migration: examine root causes of migration, such as lack of development in sending countries, and seek long-term solutions. These could include adequate international development assistance, just trade policies that promote broad-based development, and protection of labor rights and environmental standards.

Inclusion of the DREAM Act and AgJOBS: Two proposals addressing specific groups should be included in any reform legislation. The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act (DREAM) would place minor undocumented students, who came to the United States with their parents, on a path to citizenship and would make them eligible for in-state tuition. The Agricultural Jobs, Opportunity, and Benefits Act (AgJOBS) would address the legal status of migrant farm workers in the United States.

Additional Resources from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

“It is in our nation’s interest that Congress act in a bipartisan manner to replace sequestration with a balanced and thoughtful alternative that calls for shared sacrifice by all, eliminates unnecessary spending, addresses the long-term costs of health insurance and retirement programs fairly, and raises adequate revenues: “In a system of taxation based on justice and equity it is fundamental that the burdens be proportioned to the capacity of the people contributing” (Mater et Magistra, No. 132). Additional savings could be achieved by cutting nuclear weapons programs or direct agricultural subsidies.”

-Letter to Congress, December 14, 2012

Federal Budget Priorities:

Office of International Justice and Peace: uscbb.org/about/international-justice-and-peace/

Office of Domestic Social Development: uscbb.org/about/domestic-social-development

Poverty

domestic: povertyusa.org and pobrezausa.org (Spanish)

international: confrontglobalpoverty.org/

Comprehensive Immigration Reform:

Department of Migration and Refugee Services: uscbb.org/mrs

Justice for Immigrants Campaign: justiceforimmigrants.org



A Circle of Protection:

A Statement on Why We Need to Protect Programs for the Poor

In the face of historic deficits, the nation faces unavoidable choices about how to balance needs and resources and allocate burdens and sacrifices. These choices are economic, political—and moral.

As Christians, we believe the moral measure of the debate is how the most poor and vulnerable people fare. We look at every budget proposal from the bottom up—how it treats those Jesus called “the least of these” (Matthew 25:45). They do not have powerful lobbies, but they have the most compelling claim on our consciences and common resources. The Christian community has an obligation to help them be heard, to join with others to insist that programs that serve the most vulnerable in our nation and around the world are protected. We know from our experience serving hungry and homeless people that these programs meet basic human needs and protect the lives and dignity of the most vulnerable. We believe that God is calling us to pray, fast, give alms and to speak out for justice.

As Christian leaders, we are committed to fiscal responsibility and shared sacrifice. We are also committed to resist budget cuts that undermine the lives, dignity, and rights of poor and vulnerable people. Therefore, we join with others to form a Circle of Protection around programs that meet the essential needs of hungry and poor people at home and abroad.

1. The nation needs to substantially reduce future deficits, but not at the expense of hungry and poor people.
2. Funding focused on reducing poverty should not be cut. It should be made as effective as possible, but not cut.
3. We urge our leaders to protect and improve poverty-focused development and humanitarian assistance to promote a better, safer world.
4. National leaders must review and consider tax revenues, military spending, and entitlements in the search for ways to share sacrifice and cut deficits.
5. A fundamental task is to create jobs and spur economic growth. Decent jobs at decent wages are the best path out of poverty, and restoring growth is a powerful way to reduce deficits.
6. The budget debate has a central moral dimension. Christians are asking how we protect “the least of these.” “What would Jesus cut?” “How do we share sacrifice?”
7. As believers, we turn to God with prayer and fasting, to ask for guidance as our nation makes decisions about our priorities as a people.
8. God continues to shower our nation and the world with blessings. As Christians, we are rooted in the love of God in Jesus Christ. Our task is to share these blessings with love and justice and with a special priority for those who are poor.

Budgets are moral documents, and how we reduce future deficits are historic and defining moral choices. As Christian leaders, we urge Congress and the administration to give moral priority to programs that protect the life and dignity of poor and vulnerable people in these difficult times, our broken economy, and our wounded world. It is the vocation and obligation of the church to speak and act on behalf of those Jesus called “the least of these.” This is our calling, and we will strive to be faithful in carrying out this mission.



A Circle of Protection:

A Statement on Why We Need to
Protect Programs for the Poor

Programs Focused on Providing Assistance to Hungry People

The following is a summary of federal programs focused on assisting hungry and poor people. It is provided for informational purposes and should not be read as an unqualified endorsement of any particular program in its current form by any organization or individual.

DOMESTIC:

Food Assistance

- SNAP (formerly food stamps)
- Free and reduced-price school meals

Low-Income Child Care and Early Education

- Head Start

Low-Income Health Care

- Medicaid
- Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)

Tax Credits and Income Support

- Refundable tax credits (EITC; the refundable component of the Child Tax Credit)

Low-Income Education and Training

Shelter and Homelessness

Preventing Child Maltreatment

Refugee Assistance

INTERNATIONAL:

International Food Assistance and Emergency Response

- P.L. 480 Title II Food for Peace
- McGovern-Dole International Food for Education

Global Health

- Global Health and Child Survival—State Department (includes PEPFAR)
- Child Survival and Maternal Health

Sustainable International Development Programs

- Development Assistance

International Refugee Assistance and Post-Conflict Support

Peacekeeping

Sustainable International Development Programs

International Poverty-Focused Financial Services (in ways that serve the poorest of the poor)



**POVERTY-FOCUSED DEVELOPMENT
and HUMANITARIAN ACCOUNTS
SUPPORTED BY USCCB and CRS**



Funding Account Title (\$ in thousands) (Overseas Contingency Ops (OCO) funding included)	House Approps Cmte FY13	Senate Approps Cmte FY13	2013 CR*	Sequester cuts projection^
<i>State, Foreign Operations Appropriations (SFOPs)</i>				
Maternal Health and Child Survival (incl. vaccines)	605,550	678,968	605,550	-30,883
Nutrition	95,000	122,000	95,000	-4,845
Vulnerable Children (orphans and displaced children)	17,500	23,000	17,500	-893
HIV/AIDS (USAID Programs)	350,000	350,000	350,000	-17,850
Malaria and Other Infectious Diseases**	1,033,000	1,155,000	1,033,000	-52,683
HIV/AIDS (State Funding/PEPFAR)	5,542,860	5,550,000	5,542,860	-282,686
Development Assistance (e.g., education, clean water)	2,519,950	3,050,000	2,519,950	-128,517
International Disaster Assistance	922,602	1,250,000	975,000	-49,725
Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA)	1,690,400	2,300,000	1,875,100	-153,758
Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance (ERMA)	47,000	50,000	27,200	-1,387
Millennium Challenge Account (development projects)	898,200	898,200	898,200	-45,808
Contributions to International Peacekeeping Activities	1,828,182	2,006,500	1,828,182	-93,237
Peacekeeping Operations	345,000	391,100	383,818	-19,575
International Development Association (incl. debt relief)	1,325,000	1,408,500	1,325,000	-67,575
SFOPs TOTAL	17,220,244	19,233,268	17,476,360	-949,422
<i>Agricultural Appropriations (Ag)</i>				
Food for Peace (Title II)	1,149,680	1,466,000	1,466,000	-74,766
McGovern-Dole	180,320	184,000	184,000	-9,384
AG TOTAL	1,330,000	1,650,000	1,650,000	-84,150
COMBINED TOTAL (~0.5% of budget)	18,550,244	20,883,268	19,126,360	-1,033,572

*These are FY 2012 figures which fund the government through March 27, 2013.

^This represents the 5.1% cut projected by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

** House figure listed is FY 12 enacted; total was not specified in House bill.

Summary of Message to Congress and Account Descriptions

In a time of austerity and fiscal restraints, we need to give moral priority to programs that help the poor, both at home and abroad. We urge Congress to **preserve and strengthen funding for international poverty-focused development and humanitarian programs** that save lives and reduce poverty in the FY 2013 and FY 2014 budget and appropriations. The current refugee crises in Syria and Mali illustrate the urgency of this funding, especially humanitarian monies.

Maternal and Child Health programs provide proven life-saving help, such as newborn care, immunization, community treatment of pneumonia and nutrition programs that address the major killers of mothers and children in the developing world.

Nutrition programs help to improve overall nutrition during the most crucial periods of life such as pregnancy and the first years of a child's life.

Vulnerable Children programs address the special needs of displaced children and orphans.

HIV/AIDS PEPFAR (USAID Funding) funding focuses on prevention, care and treatment efforts, and the support of children affected by AIDS in over 90 countries.

Malaria and Other Infectious Diseases funding prepares for avian flu response and helps to prevent and treat HIV, malaria, TB, and other neglected tropical diseases. This fund is critical to prevent major health outbreaks.

HIV/AIDS (State Funding) funds PEPFAR, which saves millions of lives by providing HIV prevention efforts, care for families and children affected by family members with HIV/AIDS, and anti-retroviral treatment efforts. These programs also treat malaria, immunize people, and invest in research and development.

Development Assistance programs support an array of critical development activities, including education; agriculture; water and sanitation; microfinance, including women's savings' groups; climate change; feed the future; democracy promotion and good governance. These programs help promote human development, reduce vulnerabilities, and create stability in poor countries.

International Disaster Assistance funds emergency health, water, shelter and nutrition efforts through the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance. It also funds disaster risk reduction, rehabilitation, transitions to development, and emergency food security.

Migration and Refugee Assistance protects refugees and internally displaced persons, helps them to repatriate when conflict ends or natural disaster responses permit, and to resettle to safe countries like the U.S.

Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance programs respond to humanitarian crises in places like Mali and Syria.

Millennium Challenge Account provides U.S. funding to countries with a commitment to good governance; in particular, it funds infrastructure projects.

Contributions to International Peacekeeping Activities deploy peacekeeping troops to protect civilians in places like Sudan and Somalia.

Peacekeeping Operations finances the training and equipping of peacekeeping troops before they deploy to conflict countries and the professionalization of militia groups into formal military forces committed to protecting their people.

International Development Association in the World Bank provides debt relief for some of the poorest countries in the world.

Food for Peace (Title II) provides international food assistance to address emergency needs following a drought, flood, or other shock. It also strengthens the long-term capacity of rural communities and small farmers to withstand shocks and become more self-sufficient.

McGovern-Dole provides school lunches and take-home food rations to encourage students, especially girls, to attend school.

Accounts in italics are subaccounts of Global Health Programs (USAID).