



Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development

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United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

As you prepare to consider legislation that addresses deficits and spending, I reiterate the following moral criteria to guide these difficult budgetary choices:

1. Every budget decision should be assessed by whether it protects or threatens human life and dignity.
2. A central moral measure of any budget proposal is how it affects “the least of these” (Matthew 25). The needs of those who are hungry and homeless, without work or in poverty should come first.
3. Government and other institutions have a shared responsibility to promote the common good of all, especially ordinary workers and families who struggle to live in dignity in difficult economic times.

A just framework for future budgets cannot rely on disproportionate cuts in essential services to poor persons; it requires shared sacrifice by all, including raising adequate revenues, eliminating unnecessary military and other spending, and addressing the long-term costs of health insurance and retirement programs fairly.

Poverty in this country is historically high and growing. Currently over 46 million Americans live in poverty; over 16 million of them are children. In America today, the younger a person is, the more likely they are to live in poverty. Low-income tax credits are pro-work, pro-family, and some of the most effective antipoverty programs in our nation. Every year, the **Earned Income Tax Credit and the refundable Child Tax Credit** lift millions of American families out of poverty and help them live in dignity and with greater economic security. These investments should be supported and protected, not undermined or forgotten. In particular, it would be unjust and unwise to fail to renew improvements and extensions of low-income tax credits as the Congress addresses tax cuts for middle-income and wealthy Americans. Poor working families and their children may not have the most powerful lobbies, but they have the greatest needs and the most compelling claim.

We urge Congress to maintain and strengthen the bi-partisan commitment to assist those working families who struggle the most in these difficult economic times. The *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* clearly states the importance of ensuring that workers make a family wage, “a wage sufficient to maintain a family and allow it to live decently. . . . There can be several different ways to make a family wage a concrete reality. Various forms of important social provisions help to bring it about, for example, family subsidies and other contributions for dependent family members. . .” (no. 250). These tax credits that help low-income families live in dignity are important steps in this direction.

I urge you to protect low-income tax credits that help American workers escape poverty and raise their children in dignity.

Sincerely,

Most Reverend Stephen E. Blaire
Chairman
Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development