



Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development

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December 12, 2011

United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

Dear Representative:

As you complete your business for 2011, I urge you to focus especially on economic security for poor and vulnerable people, especially unemployed workers and their families.

For millions of American workers and their families, economic hardship continues and grows. The US Catholic bishops have long advocated that the most effective way to build a just economy is the availability of decent work at decent wages. When the economy fails to generate sufficient jobs, there is a moral obligation to help protect the life and dignity of unemployed workers and their families. Therefore, I strongly urge you and your colleagues to find effective ways to assure continuing Unemployment Insurance and Emergency Unemployment Compensation to protect jobless workers and their families.

The median length of joblessness has reached 10 months, and economists estimate that there are over four job seekers for every opening. Pope John Paul II, who called such prolonged and pervasive economic pain “a real social disaster,” said:

The obligation to provide unemployment benefits, that is to say, the duty to make suitable grants indispensable for the subsistence of unemployed workers and their families, is a duty springing from the fundamental principle of . . . the right to life and subsistence.
(*Laborem Exercens* No. 18)

As you finalize federal spending priorities, I urge you to consider the moral and human consequences of your decisions on the most vulnerable among us, especially unemployed workers and their families.

Sincerely,

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