



April 12, 2004

Budget Conferees  
Senate/House Leadership

Re: FY06 Budget Resolution

Dear Senator/Representative,

It has long been the ethos of our nation to assure that all people are free from want and need. Likewise, this country was founded on the promise that all who seek a better life will be given every opportunity to do so. The current budget under consideration by the House and the Senate meets neither of these broad national goals.

As you begin your work to reconcile differences between the House and Senate FY 2006 budget resolutions, the *Let Justice Roll: Faith and Community Voices Against Poverty* coalition urges you to ensure that the final budget resolution fully meets the interests of the poor, children, families, the elderly, people with disabilities, and impoverished communities. **We call on you to approve a budget conference report that increases spending for human services that serve those in poverty or near poverty and excludes the extension of the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts.**

The federal budget of the United States is a document that establishes the priorities for our country. It is a document that reflects our values as a nation and what we believe is important for the public and future generations. It is a moral document. Our federal budget should reflect the values of equality, opportunity, and justice that honors the poor, supports families, and builds strong, viable communities.

We are concerned with the values represented by both budget resolutions that emphasize cuts in spending for services that benefit the poor, children, families, the elderly, people with disabilities, and impoverished communities while extending tax cuts and adding new ones for the wealthy. We are troubled by the provision in the House budget resolution that calls for cutting \$20 billion in Medicaid over five years. These cuts will only add pressure to state budgets that have already cut services and benefits for needy populations and will add to the number of the uninsured in our country. The Senate budget resolution includes an amendment that removes reconciliation instructions that protects the Medicaid program from \$15 billion in cuts. We urge

you to stand by this principle and exclude any Medicaid cuts from the final budget conference report.

In addition, we are opposed to severe, long-term cuts to domestic discretionary programs that will reduce the availability of services to those hoping to escape the perils of poverty. Our organizations – religious, faith and community-based – can attest to the real and direct impact these cuts will have on the people we serve and our communities. The Senate budget resolution includes an amendment that raises the overall discretionary spending ceiling from \$843 billion to \$848.8 billion. We urge you to stand by this principle and include additional funding for domestic discretionary programs in the final budget conference report.

Most troubling to us is how cuts in services for those in desperate need are being used as a solution to cut the deficit while wealthy populations receive additional tax cuts. This is immoral and reflects a fundamental imbalance in addressing our nation's debt. Data from the Congressional Budget Office shows that the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts account for 48 percent of the deficit. Extending the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts envisioned in both resolutions would negate any deficit reduction plan by Congress and continue to increase the deficit. We urge you to exclude extending these fiscally irresponsible tax cuts.

We continue to affirm the role and responsibility of government to provide for those in need and believe that policy decisions must be judged on how they will impact the poor, children, families the elderly, people with disabilities and impoverished communities. A federal budget that prioritizes tax cuts for the wealthy and further erodes the economic well-being of our nation over investments in human needs and services that promote opportunity and economic comfort for all Americans is immoral. We call on you to support policies that reflect the moral values of our country more than the economic comfort of the few.

If you have questions or concerns please call Rev. Marvin M. Silver with the United Church of Christ at 202-543-1517.

Sincerely,

Albany Presbytery  
American Baptist Churches USA  
American Friends Service Committee  
California Church IMPACT  
Call to Renewal  
Center for Community Change  
Colorado Council of Churches  
Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
Faith Partners of the Americas  
Friends Committee on National Legislation  
Illinois Conference of Churches  
Kansas Ecumenical Ministries  
Lutheran Network for Justice Advocacy (IL)

Lutheran Office of Governmental Ministry (NJ)  
Lutheran Office of Governmental Ministry (NM)  
Lutheran Office on Public Policy (MD)  
Maine Council of Churches  
Minnesota Council of Churches  
Montana Association of Churches  
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd  
National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA  
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby  
New Hampshire Council of Churches  
New Mexico Conference of Churches  
New York State Council of Churches  
Pennsylvania Council of Churches  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A) Washington Office  
Protestants for the Common Good (IL)  
Southern California Ecumenical Council  
Synod Council of the Upstate New York Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
The Council of Churches of the City of New York  
The Interfaith Alliance  
The Kentucky Council of Churches  
United Church of Christ Justice & Witness Ministries  
United Church of Christ New York Conference Justice & Witness Ministry  
United Methodist, General Board for Church and Society  
US Action  
Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy  
Washington Association of Churches  
Wisconsin Council of Churches

The “*Let Justice Roll: Faith and Community Voices Against Poverty*” campaign is sponsored by the National Council of Churches USA and the Center for Community Change, as well as a host of national, state and local religious, faith-based, and community organizations.