

March 8, 2004

Dear Senator,

We the undersigned organizations, urge you to adequately fund human needs programs in the FY 05 budget and oppose attempts to reduce non-defense discretionary spending to pay for increases in defense spending.

The President's plan would spend almost as much on our military as the rest of the world combined, while reducing funding for child care, low-income housing assistance, education for the disadvantaged, crime prevention programs, environmental protection, and the global fund to halt the spread of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria around the world. Further, the plan proposes to increase the military budget by \$20 billion per year for the next five years, at the expense of these and other domestic programs. Additional untold billions will be requested to pay for military operations and reconstruction in Iraq and Afghanistan later this year.

The President's plan would extend the tax cuts permanently, further reducing revenues in the face of soaring deficits and looming shortfalls in the Social Security and Medicare trust funds in the decades to come. Revenues would be cut by more than \$1 trillion over the next ten years. If enacted, this plan would further shift the tax burden away from the wealthiest and onto the backs of middle income wage earners and future generations.

The permanent tax cut extension, the fast-growing military budget, and the rising costs of the military operations and reconstruction in Iraq and Afghanistan will make it difficult for the federal government to address significant domestic needs at a time of economic hardship here at home.

Poverty rates in the U.S. are once again on the rise. The number of people without health insurance is increasing. Over 13 million children live in households in which the specter of hunger still lingers. Poor and low-income parents are increasingly unable to find affordable, quality child care. Only one quarter of the families eligible to receive low-income housing assistance receive it. In 25 cities last year, requests for emergency food assistance increased by an average of 17 percent, and requests for emergency shelter assistance increased by an average of 13 percent. Many state and local governments, facing the worst fiscal crises in decades, are cutting programs serving poor and low-income households, despite the growing unmet human needs.

More tax cuts for the wealthy and more military spending are no way to get America back to work or to address the pressing issues facing our society in the years ahead. Congress needs to act where the President's plan has fallen far short. National security requires taking reasonable measures in partnership with other governments around the world to assure the public's safety. But national security also requires assuring other core elements of the common good: equity and justice for all; a healthy and safe environment; and safe, economically productive communities in which each person's potential may be fulfilled.

We the undersigned organizations call upon Congress to enact budget priorities to address these urgent national needs. We urge the following budget priorities: oppose permanently extending tax cuts for the wealthiest; cut wasteful, excessive military spending; extend unemployment insurance for the long-term unemployed; expand investment in education opportunities for the disadvantaged and job training for the unemployed; expand access to quality, affordable health care, child care, and housing for poor and low-income households; increase investment in cooperative international efforts to combat HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria; and increase investment in public and alternative transportation systems and renewable energy sources.

20/20 Vision

ACORN

AIDS Treatment Data Network

American Baptist Churches USA

American Friends Service Committee

Americans for Democratic Action

Arms Trade Resource Center of the World Policy Institute

Asian American Community Services

Business Leaders for Sensible Priorities

California Women's Agenda (CAWA)

Center for Women Policy Studies

Children's Defense Fund

Church Women United

Colorado Women's Agenda

Columban Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Office

Consortium For Citizens with Disabilities Issues Ad Hoc Committee

Council for a Livable World

DC Statehood Green party

East Asia-US-Puerto Rico Women's Network Against Militarism

The Episcopal Church, USA

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Florida Council of Churches

Foreign Policy in Focus

Friends Committee on National Legislation

Green Party of Washington State

Institute Justice Team, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas

Intercommunity Center for Justice and Peace

Jeannette Rankin Peace Center

Leadership Conference of Women Religious

Maryknoll Office of Global Concern

The Massachusetts Council of Churches

The National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd

National Association of People with AIDS (NAPWA-US)

National Coalition for the Homeless

National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA

National Council of Jewish Women

National Minority AIDS Council

National Policy and Advocacy Council on Homelessness
National Priorities Project
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
North Carolina Council of Churches
North Carolina Peace Action Education Fund
NY Metro Tri-State Chapter of Citizens for Global Solutions
Ohio Women, Inc.
Pax Christi USA
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A) Washington Office
Religious Witness with Homeless People
San Francisco Bay Area Progressive Challenge
True Majority
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
United Church of Christ, Justice & Witness Ministries
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
USAction
Women Against Military Madness
Women's Action for New Directions
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, US Section
Women's Project