

Tell Congress - Do Not Go Forward with Budget Cuts for Vital Human Needs Programs

ByCarolynn Race

[November 11, 2005] The FY 2006 Congressional Budget Resolution, which Congress approved earlier this year, instructed the House and Senate committees to design policies to cut at least \$35 billion over five years from programs under their jurisdiction. The Senate voted to reduce spending by \$35 billion over five years (S 1932) and the House may vote on its spending reduction package - totaling \$53.9 billion over five years - next week.

The House budget reconciliation package includes cuts to vital human needs programs - including the Food Stamp Program, Medicaid, child support enforcement, and student loan funding. It also incorporates the reauthorization of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program - including increased work hours, more limited education and training opportunities, and limited child care funding (an increase of only \$500 million). Reductions to these programs would have devastating impacts on those in need of food, health care, and education in our nation.

In light of the increased needs following Hurricane Katrina - and new data showing that poverty and hunger are on the rise, now is not the time to cut vital human needs programs.

Contact your Senators and Representative and tell them not to go forward with the budget reconciliation process. Remind them that cuts to vital human needs programs - especially now - are not acceptable. Call on them to insist on a government that follows the ethical values of justice for the poor, welfare for children, hospitality to the stranger, and assistance to the disadvantaged.

General Assembly Policy:

The 207th General Assembly (1995) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) called on Congress "to defeat any proposals that base budget or deficit reductions primarily on the services provided to children, families, the needy, and the homeless" and urged strengthening of federal commitments to these groups. The Assembly also called on Congress "to insist on a government that follows ethical values of justice for the poor, welfare for children, hospitality to the stranger, and assistance to the disadvantaged." (Minutes, p. 718)

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As a Presbyterian, I am writing to urge you not to go forward with the budget reconciliation process. Particularly in light of the devastation of hurricanes Katrina and Rita and new data showing that poverty and hunger are on the rise, reducing funding to vital human needs services - including Medicaid, Food Stamps, student loans, and child support enforcement - is unacceptable. I am also concerned that the House budget reconciliation package incorporates the reauthorization of the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families - increasing the work requirements for TANF recipients without adequate funding for child care to meet the needs of working parents.

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Our concern is rooted in our Biblical tradition. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus was asked, "'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink?' ...And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'"

Please vote no on the budget reconciliation package that comes to the House floor.