

## Save Vital Programs

ByCarolynn Race

[November 29, 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), while the House voted to reduce spending reduction by about \$50 billion over five years (HR 4241).

To see how your Representative voted on the spending reduction package, go to <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2005/roll601.xml>. To see how your Senators voted, go to [http://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll\\_call\\_lists/roll\\_call\\_vote\\_cfm.cfm?congress=109&session=1&vote=00303](http://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_lists/roll_call_vote_cfm.cfm?congress=109&session=1&vote=00303).

Now, the House and Senate budget reconciliation spending packages must be reconciled by a conference committee, made up of representatives from both chambers. A vote on the conference report must occur before the spending reductions can take effect. Those votes could occur the week of December 12th (Both chambers are now on recess. The House of Representatives is scheduled to reconvene on December 6th, and the Senate is scheduled to reconvene on December 12th.)

Call and e-mail your Members of Congress. To find their contact information, go to <http://capwiz.com/pcusa/dbq/officials/> or call the Capitol switchboard directly at (202) 224-3121. Ask your Senators and Representative not to reduce funding for vital programs that serve the most vulnerable among us. Remind them that cuts to vital human needs programs 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.

### Background:

The Senate package includes reductions to Medicaid and Medicare but not cuts to the Food Stamp Program. The House package includes spending reductions to Medicaid, food stamps, SSI, child support enforcement, foster care, and student loans, among others. The House package also includes the reauthorization of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program (TANF) including punitive work requirements that will make it more difficult for recipients to make a successful transition from welfare to work. Included is \$500 million in additional child care funding over five years - which is far from adequate to meet the current need for child care - much less the additional need from increased work requirements.

Reductions to these programs would have devastating impacts on those in need of food, health care, and education in our nation.

### 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)

E-mail: for both Senators and Representative:

As a Presbyterian, I am writing to urge you to vote against any budget reconciliation conference report that includes reductions to programs that serve those in need – particularly reductions that will directly impact beneficiaries. 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-passed 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.’”

Thank you.