

Last Chance to Stop Budget Cuts and TANF Changes

ByCarolynn Race

[January 13, 2005] In December, the House voted 212-206 and the Senate voted 51-50 (with Vice President Vice President Cheney casting the tie-breaking vote) to pass a budget reconciliation spending reduction package (S 1932) that would cut over \$39 billion over five years from programs affecting low- and moderate-income people. However, the Senate passed a version slightly different than the House, so the House must pass the Senate version before the legislation can go to the President for signature.

The House is expected to vote on these budget cuts on February 1, so you have one more chance to contact your Representative and urge that they vote NO on the budget package that would severely impact those most in need in our nation.

The package includes:

- * \$16 billion over 10 years in increased Medicaid co-payments and premiums and benefit reductions,
- * A provision that allows states to deny contraception to poor women. Family planning services are a mandatory under current Medicaid law. Under the conference agreement, states would no longer be required to cover such services.
- * Child support enforcement cuts that will lead to nearly \$8 billion in lost child support collections over 10 years,
- * Cuts a net amount of \$12.7 billion from the federal student loan programs,
- * Reauthorization of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, making significant changes to work participation requirements that would put enormous pressure on state child care programs and could lead to a sharp drop in funding for low-income working families not receiving TANF. In order to meet both the child care and work costs of these new requirements, states may decide to cut child care for low-income working families who are not receiving TANF cash assistance. By 2010, an estimated 255,000 fewer child care slots will be available for low-income working families than in 2004.

Call the Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121 and ask to be connected with your Representative. When you reach the office, ask that your Representative vote NO on the budget reconciliation spending reduction bill (S 1932) when it comes to a vote in February. Urge him/her to defeat this proposal - that bases budget reductions primarily on programs that serve those most in need, including seniors, people with disabilities, women, and children. Call on them instead to strengthen federal commitments to people in need and to follow ethical values of justice for the poor, welfare for children, hospitality to the stranger, and assistance to the disadvantaged.

To see how your Representative voted on this in December, go to <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2005/roll1670.xml>.

--Carolynn Race

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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E-mail: To Representative Only

Dear Representative:

As a Presbyterian, I am writing to urge you to vote against the budget reconciliation conference report (S 1932) when it comes to a final vote in February. The conference report includes reductions to programs that serve people in need. 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, SSI, student loans, and child support enforcement - is unacceptable. I am also concerned that the conference report incorporates the reauthorization of the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families - changing state work requirements 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.