

# ***INTERRELIGIOUS WORKING GROUP ON DOMESTIC HUMAN NEEDS***

## **A Faith Reflection on the Federal Budget**

As communities of faith, we are grounded in a shared tradition of justice and compassion, and we are called upon to hold ourselves and our communities accountable to the moral standard of our Biblical tradition. We speak out now because we are concerned about our national priorities. The federal budget serves as a fundamental statement of who we are as a nation. The decisions we make about how we generate revenue and spend resources test our commitment to these values. Thus, we hold that the federal budget should be viewed and evaluated through a moral lens: does it uphold values that will strengthen our life together as a nation and as part of the global community?

### **Community and the Common Good**

*But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you... and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will have your welfare (Jeremiah 29:7, NRSV).*

- Our nation's wellbeing is dependent on the wellbeing of all its members. In order to form a more perfect union, the preamble to the U.S. Constitution commits this nation to promoting the general welfare. In faith language we would call that the "common good." The budget should reflect a commitment to the common good by ensuring that the basic needs of all members of society are met. At this time, when more than 45 million Americans are uninsured, over 8 million are unemployed and over 12 percent live in poverty, additional cuts to critical human needs programs cannot be justified.
- Investments in education, job training, work supports, healthcare, housing, food assistance and environmental protection promote opportunity for all and strengthen families and communities. These should be budget priorities.
- Budget decisions must be evaluated not just in the short term, but with respect to their long-term effects on our children's children, the global community and on all of creation.

### **Concern for Those Who Are Poor and Vulnerable**

*Give the king your justice, O God... May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice... May he defend the cause of the poor of the people and give deliverance to the needy (Psalm 72:1-4, NRSV).*

- Government has special responsibility to care for the most vulnerable members of society. All budget decisions and administrative procedures must be judged by their impact on children, low-income families, the elderly, people with disabilities and other vulnerable populations.
- Whatever one's position on the war in Iraq or on the tax cuts, these policies are driving the deficit. Attempting to pay off the deficit by cutting programs that affect needy populations, when these programs did not lead to the deficit, is unjust.

## **Economic Justice**

*Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people (Isaiah 10:1-2, NIV).*

- God has created a world of sufficiency for all; the problem is not the lack of natural and economic resources, but how they are shared, distributed and made accessible within society.
- Our government should be a tool to correct inequalities, not a means of institutionalizing them. The federal budget should share the burdens of taxation, according to one's ability to pay, and distribute government resources fairly to create opportunity for all.

## **Endorsing Organizations**

American Baptist Churches USA  
American Friends Service Committee  
Bread for the World  
Call to Renewal  
Central Conference of American Rabbis  
Church of the Brethren Witness/Washington Office  
The Episcopal Church, USA  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
Friends Committee on National Legislation  
Jewish Council for Public Affairs  
Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office  
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  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Washington Office  
Union for Reform Judaism  
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations  
United Church of Christ Justice & Witness Ministries  
The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society  
Women of Reform Judaism