



Washington Office
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

February 24, 2010

Dear Member of Congress:

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is a church body called to practical and public expression of our faith. Even as the ELCA is committed to working through related social service, disaster response, and relief and development ministries with global impact, we acknowledge that advocacy on the federal budget is a critical public witness to the faith values of ending hunger, reducing poverty, and caring for creation.

The federal budget provides Congress with the single greatest opportunity to shape our country's priorities. This year's budget discussion comes in the context of unprecedented challenges, including a significant recession, high rate of joblessness, a climate crisis, long-term fiscal deficits, and states facing significant budget crises. In light of this, the ELCA would like to lift up the following overarching principles to guide this year's budget deliberations:

- **Concern for people living in poverty:** we urge Congress to consider the immediate needs of the most vulnerable during this challenging time;
- **Sufficient, sustainable livelihood for all:** we urge Congress to make the long-term investments needed to combat poverty systemically, both here and abroad, allowing individuals and families to become self-sufficient; and
- **Intergenerational responsibility:** aware of our responsibility to future generations, we urge Congress to protect God's creation and to correct the imbalance between revenues and spending, putting our country back on solid fiscal ground.

From these convictions and the ELCA's broad experience "on the ground," we express our hopes and concerns about this year's budget resolution. We ask the following:

1. **Protect human needs programs by including a domestic discretionary spending cap high enough** for programs to adequately serve low- and moderate-income people and meet the rising need for services in the midst of the current economic downturn.
2. **Provide \$1 billion in new investments for child nutrition programs** so this year's reauthorization will put us on track to reaching the goal of ending domestic child hunger by 2015. **Provide sufficient funding for a robust reauthorization of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)** program so low-income families can provide necessities for their dependents and achieve financial stability as they work to lift themselves out of poverty.
3. **Protect and expand targeted tax benefits for low-income, working families** by making permanent expansions to the Child Tax Credit and the Earned Income Tax Credit -- our country's largest and most effective anti-poverty program.
4. **Continue to extend federal fiscal aid to states**, particularly an extension of the increased federal Medicaid matching percentage, to ward off more cuts in state budgets that threaten to increase unemployment and thus the fragile economic recovery.
5. **Provide substantial funding for international assistance to help poor countries adapt to the already-occurring impacts of climate change, and mitigate their own greenhouse gas emissions.** The U.S. and other nations made a substantial commitment to address these needs in the

December 2009 Copenhagen Accord. President Obama's proposed budget for 2011 includes more than \$1 billion in resources that will help poor countries reduce their emissions and adapt to impacts such as drought and coastal flooding that are increasing hunger, deepening global poverty, and if left unaddressed will lead to increased migration, conflict over scarce resources and greater political instability.

6. **Make significant investments in clean, renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies and cut subsidies for fossil fuel production.** Investment in solar, wind and other renewable energy sources will provide new job opportunities and grow our economy while protecting God's creation and reducing our dependence on oil and other polluting fossil fuels.
7. **Invest in Development Assistance.** The President's budget increases development assistance to \$2.9 billion and we encourage you to fully fund this request, especially supporting poverty-focused development assistance. We recognize that efficient and effective development assistance lifts people out of poverty, grows stronger global partners, and contributes to our national security. **Provide strong support for programs to address global health.** President Obama's budget slightly increases global health funding to \$8.5 billion for programs addressing maternal health, child survival, HIV and AIDS, and other diseases. Even as re-prioritized under a "Global Health Initiative", we urge you to maintain strong support for a comprehensive approach to addressing HIV and AIDS, TB, Malaria, and other diseases.

We look forward to working with you and your staff on priorities that transform lives of poverty and hunger, and protect creation. Please know that we pray for you and we appreciate your commitment to public service.

Sincerely,



The Rev. Andrew Genszler
Director of Advocacy
ELCA Washington Office



Robert Francis
Director for Domestic Policy
ELCA Washington Office



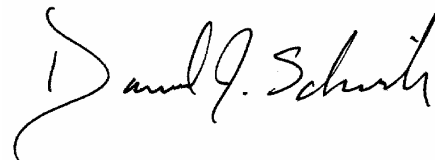
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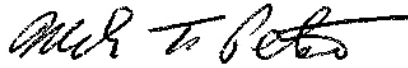
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