



A faith-based movement to overcome poverty

Budgets Are Moral Documents...and There Is Still Time to Speak

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The biblical prophets frequently spoke to rulers and kings, and usually spoke for the dispossessed, widows and orphans, the hungry, the homeless, the helpless, the least, last, and lost. People of faith are called to speak in the same ways.

Budgets are moral documents that reflect the values and priorities of a family, church, organization, city, state, or nation. Examining budget priorities is a moral and religious concern. According to press accounts, the final budget resolution could include cuts to Medicaid of \$10 billion; cuts of \$6 billion to programs that empower the poor, disabled, abused and neglected -- the least, last and lost; and billions in cuts to food stamps. These are misguided priorities. Cutting pro-work and pro-family supports for the less fortunate jeopardizes the common good. This approach is not value-based and does not square with our moral and religious convictions.

To add what some reports say could be \$70 billion more in tax cuts for the wealthy at the same time shows that this budget has not received enough moral scrutiny. Our political leadership's tax cut mentality ignores "the least of these" -- leaving them with crumbs from the feast of the comfortable. And it does nothing to help our deficit problems. Religious communities spoke clearly in the past years about the perils of a domestic policy based primarily on tax cuts for the rich, program cuts for low-income people, and an expectation of faith-based charity. **We speak clearly now against budget proposals asking that the cost of the deficit be borne by the poor, who are not to blame and can least afford it.**

Poverty reduction should be a moral imperative in politics. A budget that scapegoats the poor, fattens the rich, and asks for sacrifice mostly from those who can least afford it is a moral outrage. These budget priorities would cause the prophets to rise up in righteous indignation, as should we. Our nation deserves better vision.

People of faith will continue to speak for the least, the last and the lost. **We urge congressional leaders to join us by opposing budget resolutions that place basic human needs at risk. Will leaders who can positively impact the budget debate do so?** It's not too late to "*Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute. Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.*" (Proverbs 31:8-9)

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