



United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

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May 16, 2012

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, we wish to address the moral and human dimensions of the federal budget. A just framework cannot rely on disproportionate cuts in essential services to poor persons; it requires shared sacrifice by all, including raising adequate revenues, eliminating unnecessary military and other spending, and addressing the long-term costs of health insurance and retirement programs fairly.

As you consider budget proposals that address how to allocate burdens and sacrifices and balance resources and needs, we reiterate the following moral criteria to guide these decisions:

1. Every budget decision should be assessed by whether it protects or threatens human life and dignity.
2. A central moral measure of any budget proposal is how it affects “the least of these” (Matthew 25). The needs of those who are hungry and homeless, without work or in poverty should come first.
3. Government and other institutions have a shared responsibility to promote the common good of all, especially ordinary workers and families who struggle to live in dignity in difficult economic times.

As pastors, we see every day the human consequences of budget choices. Our Catholic community defends the unborn, feeds the hungry, shelters the homeless, educates the young, and cares for the sick, here and throughout our world. We join with other Christian leaders in calling for a “**circle of protection**” around our brothers and sisters at home and abroad who are poor and vulnerable.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states it is the proper role of government to “make accessible to each what is needed to lead a truly human life: food, clothing, health, work, education and culture, suitable information, the right to establish a family, and so on” (no. 1908). Poor and vulnerable people do not have powerful lobbyists to advocate their interests, but they have the most compelling needs.

We encourage you to reject harmful and unproductive rhetoric, and work together in a bipartisan fashion to make sure these needs are met. The Catholic bishops of the United States stand ready to work with leaders of both parties for a budget that reduces future deficits, protects poor and vulnerable people, advances the common good, and promotes human life and dignity.

Sincerely yours,

Handwritten signature of Stephen E. Blaire in black ink.

Most Reverend Stephen E. Blaire
Bishop of Stockton
Chairman, Committee on Domestic Justice
and Human Development

Handwritten signature of Richard E. Pates in black ink, preceded by a plus sign.

Most Reverend Richard E. Pates
Bishop of Des Moines
Chairman, Committee on International Justice
and Peace