



Circle of Protection

November 20, 2012

Dear President Obama and Members of Congress,

During this holiday season, more than 46 million Americans are living in poverty. America is a generous nation, and many will give their time and resources to help those in need out of a spirit of love and kindness. As Christian leaders, we work hard to encourage this kind of charity year round, but especially during Thanksgiving and Christmas.

As we do all we can to help families and individuals living in poverty, we need our elected leaders in Washington to do the same. Our country faces many long-term fiscal challenges and must act now to grow the economy, create jobs, and begin reducing our deficits. These are significant challenges that will require sacrifices from many, but we cannot solve them on the backs of the poor. Those who are already struggling the most cannot be asked to bear more burdens.

We see effective programs that meet the needs of the poor and vulnerable and help keep others from slipping into poverty: those programs and tax credits — such as Medicaid, SNAP (formerly food stamps) and the Earned Income Tax Credit — should be maintained. As our nation approaches a “fiscal showdown,” there are difficult decisions to be made, but we believe this can be done without putting the burdens on those who can least afford it.

We also believe that failing to act is a morally unacceptable option. The Congressional Budget Office has said without a change of course we could be on a road to recession and risk increased unemployment. But rushing into a bad deal that undermines future anti-poverty deadlines is no better. We need elected leaders willing to seek bipartisan agreement that advances the common good and protects poor and vulnerable people in the United States and around the world.

We pray during this season, in which we give thanks and offer gifts, that you will advance policies that protect the poor — not ones that make them poorer.

Not only will we ask the members of our congregations and organizations to collect food and clothing for those in need this holiday season, but we will ask that they raise their voices. We will be delivering their letters and concerns to our political leaders with messages calling for a moral budget that protects those who Jesus called “the least of these.”

We pray that decision-makers from both sides of the aisle will be open to the concerns of their constituents when it comes to caring for the poor and vulnerable.

Sincerely,

Leith Anderson
President, National Association of Evangelicals

Rev. David Beckmann
President, Bread for the World

Dr. Carroll A. Baltimore, Sr.
President, Progressive National Baptist Church

Bishop Stephen E. Blaire
Bishop of Stockton and Chairman, Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

Joel R. Boot

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Eugene E. Cho

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Shane Claiborne

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General Secretary, Reformed Church in America

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Former U.S. Ambassador and Congressman

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Kathryn Lohre

President, National Council of the Churches

Rev. Michael-Ray Matthews

Director of Clergy Organizing, PICO National Network

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Bishop Richard Pates

Bishop of Des Moines and Chairman of Committee on International Justice and Peace, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

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