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# Ecumenical Advocacy Days

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*As people of faith, we urge you to defend people struggling to live in dignity by funding programs that protect vulnerable populations here and abroad. Enact a faithful federal budget that serves the common good, provides robust funding for people struggling to overcome poverty, and exercises proper care of the earth.*

**Restoring economic opportunity:** *invest in programs that promote economic mobility and security, like high-quality, affordable education, sustainable jobs with living wages, policies that help families to build assets, and international aid programs that build economic security in the world's most vulnerable places.*

- A recent study found that 27% of households are “asset poor,” meaning they do not have the savings or other assets to cover basic expenses for three months if a layoff or other emergency leads to loss of income. Programs like the Saver’s Credit and Individual Development Accounts, including Child Savings Accounts, encourage savings for education, homeownership, emergencies, and retirement.
- Head Start graduates are *more likely to complete high school and continue their education* with a college degree and are also *less likely to have a criminal record*.
- Humanitarian and *poverty-focused international assistance, which comprises less than 1 percent of the federal budget, is vital to global economic security* – robust, well-targeted aid will save millions of lives, prevent conflict, build self-reliance among the world’s most vulnerable, lay the groundwork for economic growth, save money and help to create a more secure world. U.S. aid’s benefits far exceed its cost.

**Ensuring adequate resources for shared priorities:** *reinstate a just tax system that calls for shared responsibility, among individuals and corporations, to ensure sufficient revenues to meet our needs and priorities.*

- The U.S. tax system is insufficiently progressive when factoring in all federal, state and local taxes.
- With the expiration of the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts at the end of 2012, Congress will have tremendous opportunity to change the tax code, for better or for worse. Whichever reforms move forward must raise sufficient revenues to support a long-term vision that addresses the needs of poor and vulnerable individuals, here in the U.S. and abroad.

**Prioritizing true human security:** *make investments in growth, not destruction, in order to build meaningful security for individuals, families, and communities.*

- U.S. poverty-focused international aid has helped reduced *the number of people living in extreme poverty by 400 million since 1990*.
- Research shows that for every 5 percent drop in income growth in a developing country, the *likelihood of violent conflict or war within the next year increases by 10 percent*. Poverty-focused foreign aid is a vital, strategic investment that *saves our country from costly interventions* later.

- U.S. global health programs prevent more than *114,000 infants annually from being born with HIV*, provides *3.2 million people with antiretroviral treatment*, and *600,000 HIV-positive women with antiretroviral prophylaxis*.
- U.S. aid saves *3 million lives each year through immunization programs*.

**Meeting immediate need:** *protect the funding and structure of core safety-net programs while ensuring investments in critical human needs, social service, environmental protection, and humanitarian and poverty-focused international assistance programs.*

- *The number of U.S. households living on less than \$2 per person per day more than doubled between 1996 and 2011, from 636,000 to 1.46 million.*
- *About 650,000 people in the U.S. are homeless on any given night. In 2011 only about 20 percent of needy households were able to acquire housing vouchers. There is a shortage of 6 million affordable housing units at the extremely-low-income level.*
- *More than 48 million people in the U.S., including more than 16 million children, live in households that struggle to put food on the table. SNAP is a counter-cyclical program that expands and contracts according to need, ensuring a safety net in times of hardship and reduced expenditures when the economy is strong. SNAP currently serves over 46 million individuals, but it only reaches about 72 percent of eligible Americans.*
- *U.S. international anti-hunger interventions feed 46.5 million of the world's most vulnerable people annually and provides 5 million schoolchildren with school lunches each year.*
- *U.S. aid can also save more than 1 million lives each year by funding programs that focus on adequate nutrition during the crucial 1,000-day window from pregnancy to age two.*

**Recognizing a robust role for government:** *we need the government's continued partnership to combat poverty, reduce extreme inequality, restore economic opportunity for all, and rebuild a robust middle class. The faith community cannot meet the need alone.*

- *Private food banks and food pantries provide the equivalent of about 6 percent of all the food assistance provided by our nation's nutrition programs.*
- *In the last five years, food banks have seen a nearly 50 percent increase in demand. Many food bank donors are now recipients. While these charitable and private responses to hunger are essential, they do not have the reach or scope of our nation's nutrition programs.*
- *Many faith-based and humanitarian organizations are calling for at least a 10 percent increase over FY 2012 in humanitarian and poverty-focused international assistance for FY2013. Even with a ten percent increase, poverty-focused aid would still constitute less than one percent of the U.S. budget.*

**Caring for God's Creation sustainably and responsibly:** *make budget choices that protect air, water, and land – the entirety of Creation – that they might be preserved for future generations.*

- *Environmental protection programs are under attack, both from budget cuts and from policy riders that seek to undermine decades worth of sound environmental policy. Congress must reject making policy changes through the budget process and ensure continued commitments to landmarks, such as the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts.*
- *The infrastructure that supports clean water in the United States faces an annual shortfall of \$11 billion, and \$200 billion will be needed over the next 20 years to update the water infrastructure and maintain a high level of water quality.*
- *National policy must ensure the needs of vulnerable communities – including communities of color and low-income communities – are prioritized, recognizing that environmental injustices disproportionately impact these communities.*
- *U.S. international development aid helped bring safe drinking water sources to 1.3 billion people over the last decade and helped 750 million people receive sanitation for the first time.*