



FISCAL YEAR 2013

PRIORITIES FOR A
FAITHFUL BUDGET

ACTING WITH MERCY AND JUSTICE AS
ONE NATION UNDER GOD

A Call to Action from the Faithful Budget Campaign

Submitted to the United States Congress on March 22, 2012

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I. PREAMBLE

A. Our Message to Political Leaders

We write as communities of faith where respect and care for one another is a sacred imperative and we are learning to "love our neighbor as ourselves." But American society as a whole is, or should be, also such a place, where we delight in the value of each and every one, and gladly accept a mutual responsibility for one another's wellbeing.

As the American people we understand ourselves to be "one nation under God," not a mere collection of isolated individuals. All of us have something to contribute to our life together, and none of us is excluded from our circle of mutual care and concern. Government of, by and for the people at its best is a vital forum for promoting the common good and ensuring that no one is left behind.

A faithful budget must promote a compassionate and comprehensive vision for the future. As communities of faith, we call on our elected leaders to craft a federal budget that fulfills our shared duty to each other in all segments of society to those who are struggling to overcome poverty or are especially vulnerable, and to future generations through our collective responsibility as stewards of Creation.

Our message to our national leaders -- rooted in our sacred texts -- is this: ***Act with mercy and justice by serving the common good, robustly funding support for poor and vulnerable people, both at home and abroad, and exercising proper care and keeping of the earth.***

In the current political and economic climate, neither party is giving voice to the needs of the families who are struggling to overcome poverty. It is simply not true that we must reduce assistance for the poorest among us in order to achieve fiscal recovery. A Faithful Federal Budget can advance fiscal responsibility while increasing support for the poor and vulnerable, by focusing on job creation and economic revitalization, an equitable tax system based on fairness, and true human security over disproportionate military spending.

The way to national recovery is not to close our hearts to the poor, but to heed the words of the Prophet Isaiah who assures us, "[I]f you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday . . . you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in" (58:10-12).

B. The Scriptural Call

In this time of global economic crisis, Jews, Christians, Muslims, and other communities of faith, guided by our sacred texts, advocate a constructive vision of the directions needed for a just society and a healthier world. The common prophetic message found in sacred texts does not rest solely on eternal life, but on God's Will being done "on earth as it is in heaven." Our shared traditions insist that piety and righteousness cannot remain only individual endeavors, but must also encompass our society's commitment to justice and mercy.

We respond to the call of the Prophet Isaiah, who challenges the nation to know God's ways and to practice true piety and righteousness -- breaking injustice and oppression, feeding the hungry, and sheltering the homeless:

. . . . Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? – Isaiah 58

The New Testament Gospels call us to embody in action the just vision of Isaiah's piety and righteousness:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" – Jesus' words in Luke 4:18-19

The Qur'an teaches a piety that is inextricably linked with the spending of money for the betterment of those who are struggling:

Never shall you attain to true piety unless you spend on others out of what you cherish yourselves; and whatever you spend – verily, God has full knowledge thereof. – The Holy Qur'an 3:92

Guided by these sacred texts, we lift our voices to speak to the social and ecological challenges we face together under God -- as a people, as a nation, and as global citizens.

C. Principles of a Faithful Federal Budget

Restoring Economic Opportunity: The opportunity to work hard and improve one's economic condition is a value that defines this nation. But it is a reality increasingly available only to those who are already wealthy. We believe in the inherent worth of every individual and that God intends dignity, health, and wholeness for each person. We need an economy that empowers workers to self sufficiency and provides pathways out of poverty. The principles of "liberty and justice for all", as enshrined in our Pledge of Allegiance, seem hollow in light of the pace at which wealth and opportunity have shifted from the many to the few. We believe that everyone deserves equal opportunity and must therefore have equal access to the building blocks for success. *We urge Congress to make the long-term investments needed to sustain the United States' economic renewal, create economic opportunity for all, and work toward ending poverty. This requires investments in high-quality, affordable education, sustainable jobs with living wages, and policies that help families to build assets.*

Ensuring Adequate Resources for Shared Priorities: From the time a federal income tax was established, the concept of a progressive tax system, based on the ability to pay, has been widely accepted as fair and equitable. Over the last several decades our tax system has grown less progressive, and now frequently places more of a tax burden, as a percentage of income, on the

middle class than it does on the wealthiest among us. The tax system also creates financial incentives for individuals to act in ways that are thought to strengthen our social fabric, such as investing and saving for retirement, starting a business, owning a home, getting a college education – even charitable giving. Because of the way tax benefits are structured, however, too often low-wage workers do not earn enough to access those benefits. This results in a system that perpetuates inequality by rewarding behavior that generates financial security for those who already have it, while excluding those who are working hard at low-wage jobs and need help the most. An equitable, moral tax code should reward the efforts of low-income people to work and save at every level. A Faithful Budget will act to correct this imbalance. ***Investment in the renewal of our nation's economic well-being and protecting the poor and vulnerable will itself serve to reduce the long-term deficit. Such investment should be financed through an equitable tax system founded on fairness, where those who have reaped extraordinary benefits contribute proportionately to the good of all.***

Prioritizing True Human Security: With well over half of the discretionary budget dedicated to military spending, the United States is unable to invest in other areas that build substantial human security in our communities. Global threats to peace and security need not instill a national inclination to make an imbalanced investment in new weapons systems, detention centers, and militarized border walls, leading to disproportionate spending on the mechanisms of war and enforcement, while we become less secure in so many other ways. We believe a faithful budget must reevaluate these priorities, increase investment in the areas of health, education, and community well-being that are essential to true security. ***Our budget priorities should reflect a more balanced approach to the full spectrum of investments that build meaningful security for individuals, families, and communities.***

Meeting Immediate Need: As it always has been, the faith community itself continues to be committed to serving vulnerable populations at home and around the world. At the same time, we urge our nation to implement policies that will reduce poverty and hardship. As a united people committed to compassion and justice, we fulfill our calling as a people when we invest in a social safety net that will support the vulnerable in times of hardship, such as recession, unemployment, sickness, and old age. Even as the economy has begun to revive, unemployment rates remain remarkably high. Proactive stimulus policies and the elasticity of the mandatory safety net programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Medicaid, are incredibly effective measures that have prevented millions from falling into poverty. ***Congress has the moral and pragmatic responsibility, even as it pursues long-term deficit reduction, to adequately fund critical human needs, social service, environmental protection, and humanitarian and poverty-focused international assistance programs, all of which ensure human security in its broadest sense.***

Accepting Intergenerational Responsibility: We cannot leave our children a legacy of debt, but neither must we leave them a legacy of rising poverty and growing inequality. As educational programs, adequate housing, health care, nutrition programs, job training, and other community services all fall victim to pressures to reduce the deficit, economic vulnerability continues to grow and more families find themselves one disaster away from poverty. Our nation's vital social safety net did not create the deficit, and the vulnerable populations served by the social safety net it should not bear the brunt of deficit-reduction measures. ***A Faithful Budget will seek***

wise and far-sighted ways to reduce the nation's long-term deficits while protecting the most vulnerable among us.

Using the Gifts of Creation Sustainably and Responsibly: In the book of Genesis, God called Creation “good.” Because of Creation’s intrinsic worth, the earth and its resources deserve our respect and our consideration. While the earth has been given to us as a home, and while its resources are bountiful and good, we have abused this gift, placing unsustainable burdens on our environment and its resources. As a human community, we owe a debt to our environment, both for its own sake as well as our own. Environmental degradation has substantial, and potentially irreversible, short and long-term impacts, such as rising health care costs from air pollution and resulting respiratory problems; increased premature deaths due to the cumulative impacts of poor air quality; declining water quality in our communities; degradation of public lands; global climate change, which is already affecting some of the most vulnerable populations on earth; and loss of open space. *A Faithful Budget must encompass a reverence for our created environment, making choices that protect air, water, and land—the entirety of Creation—gifts from God that must be available to and protected for this generation and those to come.*

Providing Access to Health Care for All: As providers of services and care, both physical and spiritual, our members, congregations, and institutions are well-acquainted with the importance of providing access to health care for all people. All individuals, regardless of their age, income, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, race or ethnicity, geography, employment status, or health status, deserve equal access to quality, affordable, inclusive and accountable health care. Reducing health care options for some based on any of these factors is profoundly unjust. As we examine the interwoven web of access within the federal budget, there are areas of profound concern for the common good and practices of good stewardship. *A Faithful Budget will ensure access to quality health care by investing in wellness and making needed improvements in the health care system.*

Recognizing a Robust Role for Government: We are inspired by a common conviction that God has called on all of us – as individuals, as communities of faith, and as a society acting together through our government – to protect the vulnerable and promote the dignity of all people. For this reason the faith community has worked alongside the United States government for decades to protect those struggling to overcome poverty in the U.S. and abroad. People who need help paying rent or feeding their children come to us, frequently as a first and last resort, and we do all we can to provide the aid that compassionate love demands. And yet, faith communities and agencies cannot do it alone. The need is great as many who once gave to our ministries of mercy are now recipients of our charity. *We need the government's continued partnership to combat poverty by providing a truly adequate short-term safety net, and by means of policies that serve to prevent poverty, reduce extreme inequality, restore economic opportunity for all, and rebuild a robust middle class.*

D. The Call

As faith communities and Americans of conscience we stand with those among us with those whose need is great and we call on all of us to act together as the American people with mercy and justice, and to re-arrange our national priorities to focus on the common good. Accordingly, this Faithful Budget boldly proclaims the aspirational goals toward which, we believe, our nation

much strive. More pragmatically, we urge Congress and the President to show their intent to move toward these goals by enacting legislation that enhances the well-being of all Americans and to make a good faith increase in funding for the impoverished and the vulnerable here and abroad in fiscal year 2013.

Let us embrace a call to live together in community, not agreeing on everything, but sharing in the common purpose of bettering our nation, protecting our brothers and sisters here in the U.S. and around the world, and sustainably caring for our environment. We call on Congress and the Administration to craft a federal budget that protects the common good, values each individual and his or her livelihood, and helps lift the burden on the poor, rather than increasing it while shielding the wealthiest from any additional sacrifice.



Arkansas Interfaith Alliance



Center of Concern



Center on Conscience and Waar



Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada



Christian Reformed Church Office of Social Justice



Church of the Brethren



Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach

Commission on Social Action of
Reform Judaism



Conference of
Major Superiors of Men



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



Franciscan Action Network
Transforming the World in the Spirit of St. Francis and St. Clare



Friends Committee on National Legislation



Sisters of Mercy of the Americas
Hermanas de la Misericordia de las Américas



Islamic Society of
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Most Holy Trinity



*Muslim
Public Affairs Council*



Sisters of the Good Shepherd
The National
Advocacy Center



National Council of
Churches of Christ, USA



Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Office of Public Witness



Progressive National
Baptist Convention

UNITARIAN
UNIVERSALIST
ASSOCIATION OF
CONGREGATIONS



United Church of Christ,
Justice and Witness Ministries

United Methodist Church,
General Board of Church and Society

This call for a Faithful Budget represents various faith communities that encompass a broad sweep of society from all sides of the political spectrum. In a climate lacking in civil discourse and an ability to find common ground, there is a need to remember the values that make us who we are as a nation. Our diverse faiths bring us together, modeling the need to partner with each other in order to seek a more perfect union.

The above Preamble, including the Principles of a Faithful Federal Budget, represents the consensus view of the endorsing organizations. Endorsement of and common cause with the Preamble does not imply endorsement of or support for all of the following priority areas described in this document's specific sections.

II. A FAITHFUL BUDGET FOR DOMESTIC HUMAN NEEDS

A. Introduction

A Faithful Budget promotes social and environmental sustainability, ensuring a livable world for generations to come. Our indigenous ancestors expressed that decisions ought to be made keeping in mind their long-term effects -- even to the seventh generation. We encourage our national leaders to consider decisions of revenue and spending in the context of how they will benefit our children's children as well as how they impact our own lives.

Even before the recession, too many families were struggling to make ends meet. Faced with insurmountable odds, they were unable to lift themselves out of poverty. The recession has brought even more families to the brink of financial disaster, with many kept out of poverty only by unemployment insurance and other programs designed to meet rising need in times of economic trouble.

Reflecting the Need:

- In 2010, 15.1 percent of the U.S. population, and 22 percent of all children, lived below the federal poverty line (\$22,113 for a family of four).¹
- Most Americans (51.4%) will live in poverty at some point before age 65.²
- In most areas, a family of four needs to earn 200 percent of the federal poverty line in order to provide children with basic necessities. In 2010, 1 in 3 people and almost 1 in 2 children did not attain this income level.³
- As we reflect on our needs as a nation, we must consider the inequalities which exist across groups. For example, in 2010, African-Americans (27.4%), Hispanics (26.6%), and single female householders (31.6%) were more than twice as likely as the overall white population (13.0%) to live below the poverty threshold.⁴ This places greater burden on these families to care for their children or other dependent members. They are at greater risk of food insecurity, homelessness, and untreated health concerns, pushing them to rely more heavily on the social safety net.

A Faithful Budget must invest in a social safety net, providing the essential needs of our communities, ensuring safe and healthy development of families and individuals into the future, and supporting those who are most vulnerable due to unemployment, sickness, and old age, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, or religious or sexual orientation. Many programs supporting health and public safety have been devastated in recent years. The budget elements described below would shift the direction, taking steps toward positive development of people and communities.

B. Economic Security and Mobility

Two general strategies are necessary in order to bring about greater economic fairness within the United States. The first is to ensure a level playing field for individuals, families, and communities to access resources allowing them to contribute their time, treasure, and talents for the betterment of the community. The other is to ensure that when members do fall into a state of poverty, there is a strong safety net to allow them to continue to live in dignity.

The federal budget assists with the first strategy through programs that provide economic security and mobility, asset building, education, and meaningful employment.

1. Creating Mobility Through Tax Credits

A Faithful Budget does more than simply meet the needs of poor and vulnerable people. A Faithful Budget simultaneously promotes economic opportunity, mobility, and security. Refundable tax credits for low-income working families are some of the most effective anti-poverty programs in the country. In 2010, the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) lifted 5.4 million people out of poverty.⁵ The Child Tax Credit lifted nearly 2.6 million people out of poverty.⁶ Moreover, these tax credits reward work because the benefits increase with earnings. The EITC and Child Tax Credit also promote economic mobility. A majority of beneficiaries only receive the EITC for one or two years before moving on to higher income levels. Finally, these credits help grow the economy, as recipients spend their benefits quickly and in their local communities. Every \$1 of refundable tax credits generates about \$1.26 in economic growth.⁷

This Faithful Budget proposes to strengthen refundable tax credits so they can effectively lift more individuals out of poverty and build a broader, more stable middle class. This budget:

- Makes the current EITC and Child Tax Credit benefit levels permanent. Unless Congress acts, the current EITC and Child Tax Credit benefit levels will expire at the end of 2012.
- Lowers the income threshold of the Child Tax Credit down to zero so working families can count every dollar they earn towards the credit.
- Expands the EITC for non-custodial parents and workers without children.
- Increases funding for Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites so that low-income individuals can claim their tax credits without paying expensive and excessive fees to professional tax preparers.

"EITC is absolutely worth it. When it was just me and Nessa, the EITC is what allowed me to actually get the things I needed for her. For me today, for the working class, the EITC means you are able to do what you need to do. We're caught up -- on rent, gas, and electric -- all our bills are back to zero because of the EITC."

---Staci Hariston, Cincinnati, Ohio

Staci's husband works the 2nd shift -- 1:30 pm until between 3 and 6 am. He sees his kids for a small amount of time before he goes to work in the afternoon. His gross pay (as Sanitation Shift Leader) is too high for Staci to qualify for benefits like childcare, so Staci stays at home with her 9-month-old son and 2½-year-old daughter. She says the EITC makes a big difference in being able to provide for her children and keep her household.

2. Asset Building Policies

A family's ability to save and accumulate assets is critical for economic mobility. According to a 2009 survey by the U.S. Census and the FDIC, at least 25.6% of U.S. households, or nearly 30 million households and 60 million adults, are either unbanked or under-banked.⁸ Many of these households end up using payday loans or pawn shops for credit. Assets can help chart a way out of poverty and propel low-income families into the middle class. 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.⁹ Alternatively, assets can help families and individuals remain economically secure during emergencies and

unexpected events. The recent recession significantly increased economic insecurity in the U.S. From 2008 through 2010, 20.5% of Americans experienced an economic loss of at least 25% from one year to the next and lacked an adequate financial safety net to replace that lost income.¹⁰

This Faithful Budget proposes to help low-income families build assets by:

- Expanding access to Individual Development Accounts, including Child Savings Accounts.
- Expanding the Saver's Credit to encourage savings for education, homeownership, emergencies, and retirement.
- Improving access to safe and affordable financial services for low-income workers -- especially unbanked and under-banked households -- and establishing consumer protections that combat asset stripping.
- Eliminating asset limits that penalize low-income families for building savings and create a disincentive to save in the first place.

3. Education

Federal education programs play a key role in ensuring all children have access to an education, regardless of family background or income. Nearly 50 million children are educated in public schools,¹¹ many of which are in dire need of renovation and modernization.¹² As the importance of a quality education in beginning a successful career continues to rise, so does the importance of learning new technology and entering the job market with tangible skills.¹³ Investing in education programs for early education through higher education must remain a priority to ensure a competitive national and global job market and a bright future for this nation.

The Head Start program is critically important for many young children and families. 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.¹⁴ The Head Start program also improves the lives of parents, helping them meet their economic goals and increasing their involvement in their children's lives¹⁵.

The federal government should also take an active role in continuing to fund programs which aim to bring greater equity, protecting the most vulnerable. We must ensure that all people have access to educational opportunities, through programs such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act,¹⁶ Title IX (which protects equal access for women in the classroom and in athletics),¹⁷ and Title I Formula Grants, the federal government's primary tool for equalizing educational opportunity as a civil right. The Federal Pell Grant Program¹⁸ also has an extremely positive impact for need-based students, especially those from rural parts of the country.

Today, there are many challenges impacting the quality of education our nation's students receive. At a time when education funding is being drastically reduced, we must keep in mind the cornerstone role education plays in personal success, innovation, and the economy.

Therefore, a Faithful Budget will:

- Invest in the repair, renovation, and modernization of public school facilities to reduce structural and environmental concerns.
- Preserve funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and Title IX.
- Fully fund the Title I formula program to ensure that every child who qualifies for services receives those services as a civil right.
- Continue to invest in Head Start and other early childhood education programs, offering our children the best opportunity for future success.
- Provide support for students to access higher education by continuing to fund the Federal Pell Grant Program and other training opportunities.

4. Meaningful Employment

Work is more than a means to making a living; it provides a person the opportunity to use their gifts, talents, and education to contribute to the common good. Work should enhance the human person and take place in environments which elevate his or her self-esteem. However, this is frequently neither the view nor the reality of work.

The official federal unemployment rate stands at 8.3%.¹⁹ More than 13 million people are unemployed. If those who are unemployed but have ceased looking for a job and those who are working part time but would prefer to work full time are included, the numbers are far higher. States and municipalities are being forced to lay off teachers, police, firefighters, and other essential public workers because of budget shortfalls. Our nation's infrastructure is crumbling at an accelerating rate. Unemployment benefits for our nation's unemployed are under threat.

The federal budget should include significant financial resources to create jobs and help generate a “virtuous cycle” of economic recovery. Without these resources -- and without the new economic strength these resources will generate -- our country will lose rather than create jobs, unemployed workers and their families will continue to suffer severely, and recovery will not happen.

Therefore, to address this critical situation, a Faithful Budget will:

- Channel resources to create vital and sustainable jobs: jobs that revitalize our nation’s manufacturing, jobs that will rebuild our nation's infrastructure, jobs that expand childcare, and green jobs such as mass transit, and clean-up of toxic dumps. The graying of America is leading to greater need for workers in semi-skilled health care areas. The loss of jobs in the public arena is escalating the unemployment rate. It is important that the jobs be regained in education and public safety.
- Target spending to bring the greatest boost to communities, groups of workers, and industries that are most distressed and to cities and regions with the worst unemployment levels.
- Provide continuing assistance for unemployed workers and their families, including extended unemployment benefits for the long-term unemployed, COBRA subsidies, food stamps (SNAP), and other safety net programs.
- Help states and municipalities maintain and strengthen public safety programs and retain teachers, police, firefighters, and other essential public workers.

- Prioritize educational grants which match instructional programs with areas of high need, such as geriatric health care.
- Include resources sufficient to turn an economy around and meet the needs of people and families who are hurting through no fault of their own, pointing the way to a more merciful and just society.

C. A Strong Safety Net

A strong safety net is necessary to support members of our communities during times they are struggling to meet basic needs, allowing them and their families to live in dignity.

1. Housing

Living in dignity demands a safe and secure place in which to live. According to the 2010 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress, approximately 650,000 people in the U.S. are homeless on any given night, an increase of 1.1% from January 2009 to January 2010.²⁰ Much homelessness is due to insufficient housing stock for those households with the lowest income.

a. Affordable Housing

Demand for rental housing is increasing due, in part, to the foreclosure crisis, forcing rental prices to escalate and creating two significant new challenges in the affordable rental market. Low-wage workers struggle to find affordable rentals, and the high unemployment rate exacerbates the need for additional units affordable to very-low-income and extremely low-income households.

In 2011, only about 20% of needy households were able to acquire housing vouchers. Funding cuts for 2012 eliminate assistance to an additional 12,000 families. At this time, there is a shortage of six million housing units affordable at the extremely low-income level (ELI; earnings at or below 30% of the area median income). These members of our communities are most at risk for homelessness or are homeless. For every 100 ELI households, there are only 39 units in existence. This is down from 44 units in 2007 due to the drop in housing stock.²¹

NUMBER (IN MILLIONS) OF RENTER HOUSEHOLDS AND NUMBER OF AFFORDABLE UNITS
BY INCOME LEVEL IN 2009 AS COMPARED TO 2010²²

	2009			2010		
Income Level as % of AMI	<30%	<50%	<80%	<30%	<50%	<80%
# of Renter Households	9.6	16.5	24.6	9.8	16.9	25.1
# of Affordable Units	5.6	15.5	33.8	5.5	14.7	33.6
Surplus (Deficit) of Affordable Units	(3.9)	(1.0)	10.2	(4.3)	(2.1)	10.6

At the same time, government attention and resources have neglected the needs of renters, focusing on homeownership and foreclosure prevention. Funding enacted between FY2010 and FY2012 cut funding for or eliminated most programs assisting households at low- to extremely low-income levels. This is particularly tragic as both the President's budget request and the

House proposals for HUD are mandating a huge increase in the minimum rents to be paid by residents (\$75 and \$69.45 respectively).

HOUSING PROGRAM FUNDING - BUDGET CHART (FIGURES IN MILLIONS)²³

Program	FY2010 enacted	FY2012 enacted
Tenant Protection Vouchers	120.0	75.0
Public Housing Capital Fund and Operating Funds	7,275.0	5,836.9
Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS	335.0	332.0
Housing for Elderly (Sect. 202)	825.0	374.6
Housing for Persons with Disabilities (Sect. 811)	300.0	165.0

Affordable housing stock is being lost due to upper-income households moving back to the heart of the city and the rapid increase in construction of office space in the same areas. Replacement vouchers for those displaced by this trend are increasingly available only for outlying areas, adding transportation cost and time to the difficulties faced by those in poverty. This overpowering of one group by those more powerful is in opposition to a sense of solidarity, a value to faith groups.

b. Home Energy Assistance

In order for a home to be safe and allow a family to live in comfort, there must be access to sufficient heat and cooling, the ability to preserve and prepare food, and sufficient energy to operate necessary appliances. In 2010, 46.2 million people lived below the poverty threshold and 8.9 million of them received energy assistance, a 54% increase since 2008. There has been a 150% increase since 2008 in veterans receiving energy assistance. An increasing percentage of those receiving LIHEAP are veterans, up 150% since 2008 to 1.78 million.²⁴

In FY2012, the funding cut of approximately \$1.5 billion resulted in a reduction in the value of grants to households. At a time when energy costs are rising sharply, the average grant fell from \$417 in 2011

"I use LIHEAP every year -- it's a great program. I work part-time, and without LIHEAP, I wouldn't be able to make it. It helps me with gas and electric bills so that I can have a little bit extra to do things like get back and forth to work."
---Evelyn Baskins, Cincinnati, Ohio

(20% of the average energy cost) to \$308 in 2012.²⁵ The struggle to support a home with rising rents and energy costs frequently places families at risk of not being able to meet other needs, such as health care or sufficient nutrition to keep all members healthy.

c. Preventing and Addressing Homelessness

In addition to affordable housing and home energy costs, the plague of homelessness continues to cause severe hardship, leaving millions of families without a place to call "home." Fortunately, our nation's homeless population has received somewhat greater attention in the past few years and, in fact, has decreased by 1 percent (approx. 7,000 people) between 2009 and 2011. Among homeless individuals and families, the only increase was among those living outside of homeless shelters. According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness:

This trend appears to be due to the \$1.5 billion federal Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program -- a federal stimulus initiative focused on preventing a recession-related increase in homelessness. The program worked, but the funds are nearly gone. In addition, persistent unemployment, rising housing cost burden, and an increase in doubled up households suggest heightened risk of homelessness for more and more Americans. In order to prevent a rise in homelessness in the future, we need to prioritize a safety net for the most vulnerable, and to ramp up investment in proven, housing-centered solutions.²⁶

Low incomes, high housing costs, and a lack of supportive services often make people vulnerable to homelessness. Ultimately, as the nation moves to address the debt and deficit crises, it will be essential to ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable are prioritized in order to avoid increased homelessness, suffering, and cost. Prevention and rapid re-housing clearly work -- this is the lesson of the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program which appears to have forestalled an increase in homelessness despite the poor economy, high unemployment, and lack of affordable housing. With 40 percent of homeless people unsheltered, the crisis response system must be improved. Permanent supportive housing works to house chronically homeless people and veterans with disabilities, and continued investment will solve these problems.

A Faithful Budget will:

- Provide additional units of housing affordable to very-low- and extremely low-income households by funding the already authorized National Housing Trust Fund.
- Ensure sufficient vouchers for all households to have access to safe and affordable living space.
- Fund the LIHEAP program at no less than the FY2011 level and increase access to energy assistance for low-income families and veterans.
- Continue to invest in the successful Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program.
- Invest in improving our crisis response system to better respond to the emergency needs of unsheltered families and individuals.
- Provide funding for permanent supportive housing to chronically homeless people, homeless veterans, and homeless people with disabilities.

2. Domestic Hunger and Nutrition

The need for food assistance has never been greater. More than 48 million Americans, including more than 16 million children, live in households that struggle to put food on the table²⁷:

- In 2009, an estimated 8.4 billion meals were missed due to food insecurity.²⁸
- Nutrition program participation has greatly increased, and food banks have seen a nearly 50 percent increase in demand.²⁹
- More than 11.5 million low-income Americans live in food deserts (more than one mile from a supermarket).³⁰

Our nation's nutrition programs, in conjunction with food banks and private charity, work to meet the nutritional needs of those living in and near poverty, but not all food assistance reaches everyone in need. Gaps in access and participation are particularly concerning for vulnerable children and older Americans who are at high nutritional risk.

a. Emergency Food Assistance

Fifty-five percent of agencies served by food banks are faith-based.³¹ Yet faith communities and agencies cannot end hunger alone. Many people who once gave faithfully are now recipients of charity. Additionally, operating costs have increased and available food sources have decreased. The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) typically provides food commodities through these food banks, pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters. Despite increased need, TEFAP commodity support dropped nearly 30 percent in 2011 as food prices increased and the agricultural economy remained strong, leaving food banks struggling to make up the difference.³²

b. Addressing Child Hunger

Children are especially vulnerable to the ill effects of hunger and malnutrition. Programs like SNAP (formerly Food Stamps), the WIC Program (Women, Infants, Children), and school meals help protect children from hunger and ensure they are well fed and ready to learn.

- The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helps households put food on the table during times of great need, keeping millions out of poverty. Nearly half of SNAP participants are children.³³ SNAP currently serves over 46 million Americans,³⁴ but it only reaches about 72 percent of eligible Americans.³⁵
- The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC Program), currently serving 8.9 million women and young children,³⁶ only reaches about 61 percent of eligible Americans.³⁷
- More than 20 million low-income children participated in the National School Lunch Program in 2011.³⁸ While the same children are also eligible for the School Breakfast Program and the Summer Food Service Program, only about half received breakfast and 10 percent received summer food.³⁹

c. Addressing Elder Hunger

Hunger and food insecurity also have serious consequences for older Americans. Unfortunately, only one-third of eligible older Americans participate in SNAP.⁴⁰ While the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) primarily serves seniors by providing monthly food packages designed to supply vital nutrients, it does not operate nationwide. Nevertheless, CSFP provides a vital safety net -- a monthly bag of groceries -- to more than half a million people every month.⁴¹

A Faithful Budget will fully fund our nation's nutrition programs, covering all who are eligible, by:

- Protecting SNAP and permanently adjusting benefit levels to reflect the cost of a healthy diet.
- Funding the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) to cover all eligible women and young children.
- Funding school breakfast and childcare feeding grants to better connect eligible children with available child nutrition programs.
- Funding and expanding the Commodity Supplemental Food Program so it can operate nationwide.
- Allowing TEFAP commodity purchases to respond to high unemployment levels to help meet increased emergency food assistance needs.

3. Worker support

All workers rely on supports allowing them to remain in the workforce while caring for the needs of family members. Those with economic strength are able to acquire support on their own. However, those struggling to survive economically must be able to rely on public systems of support.

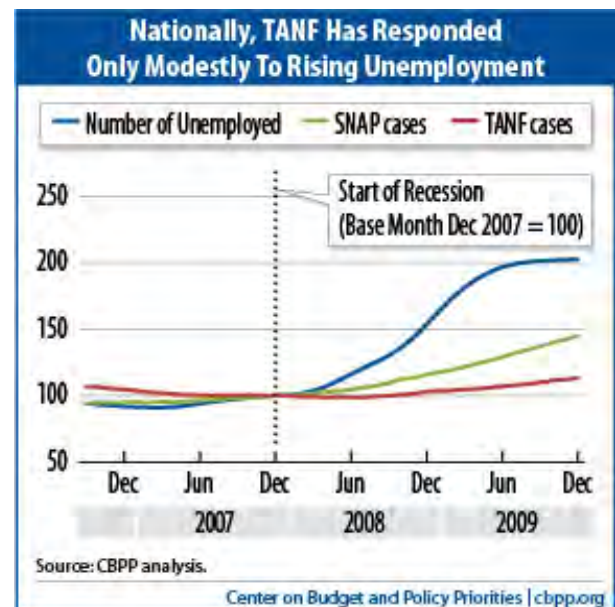
At present, hundreds of thousands of families are on waiting lists for childcare subsidies.⁴² Only one out of seven children eligible for federal childcare assistance receives it, placing undue strain on their working parents.⁴³ In addition, nearly 40 million Americans do not have access to paid sick days, requiring painful choices between care-giving and earning a livelihood every time a worker or his or her child gets sick.⁴⁴ To exacerbate an already-difficult working climate for low-income workers, public transit systems are limited or nonexistent in some areas and at certain times of day, jeopardizing a worker's ability to be punctual and get to work affordably.⁴⁵

A Faithful Budget will:

- Invest in and increase access to affordable childcare.
- Increase forms of transportation assistance, such as public subsidies for transportation expenses and investments in reliable, safe public transit systems.

4. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families⁴⁶

The recent recession severely impacted many families in the U.S., particularly those whose financial stability was already precarious. Using funding from Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), states helped some low-income families by providing a variety of services and support, including income assistance, childcare, aid to children at risk of abuse and neglect, education, job training, and transportation. While the TANF program provided some assistance to low-income families who had lost their livelihoods, many families at the very bottom of the economic ladder did not receive sufficient help.⁴⁷ In 2009, TANF



assisted just 28 families for every 100 in poverty. Moreover, during the economic downturn, the number of persons needing this kind of assistance increased as the unemployment rate rose. Nevertheless, a substantial number of state programs did not respond adequately to the rising unemployment rate.

The economic insecurity exposed severe shortcomings in the TANF program; because of the block grant structure, adequate federal funding was not available for states to raise caseloads. Moreover, many people struggling in poverty face multiple barriers that keep them from finding jobs and getting the help they need. Low-income families find it very difficult to find jobs, making it increasingly challenging for TANF recipients to meet the expectations of their work requirements.

A Faithful Budget will:

- Provide states with a substantial increase in TANF funding and incentives to assist more children and families out of poverty.
- Encourage states to focus less on reducing caseloads by changing the measure of success and improving coordination of services and interagency collaboration.
- Encourage states to provide increased access to education, job training, and other support services.

III. A FAITHFUL BUDGET FOR HEALTH CARE

A. Introduction

A Faithful Budget embraces a system of health care that is **inclusive, accessible, affordable, and accountable**. Health care is a shared responsibility that is grounded in our common humanity. We are guided by a divine will to treat each person with dignity and to live together as an inclusive community. Affirming our commitment to the common good, we acknowledge our enduring responsibility to care for one another. We recognize that society is whole only when we care for the most vulnerable among us, so we are led to discern the human right to health care and wholeness. Therefore, we are called to act with compassion by sharing our abundant health care resources with everyone.

Health care must contribute to the common good by being affordable for individuals, families, and society as a whole. Through the sacred act of Creation, we are all endowed with the talents, wisdom, and abundant resources. In our calling to be faithful stewards, we understand our responsibility to use our health care resources effectively, to administer them efficiently, and to distribute them with equity.

All persons should have access to health services that provide necessary care and contribute to wellness. Humanity is divinely created, and all persons should benefit from those actions which contribute to our health and wholeness. As such, we are called to act with justice and love to ensure that all of us have access to the health care we need in order to live out the fullness of our potential both as individuals and as contributing members of our society. We must work together to identify and overcome all barriers to and disparities in such care.

Our health care system must be accountable, offering a quality, equitable, and sustainable means of keeping us healthy as individuals and as a community. We are responsible for the care of our bodies to the best of our ability and for the care of one another regardless of individual circumstances. Therefore, individuals, families, governments, businesses, and the faith community are called to work in partnership for a system that ensures fully informed, timely, quality, and safe care that treats body, mind, and spirit.

Reflecting the Need:

Today we face critical challenges to closing the gap in health care coverage, especially among the most vulnerable and ailing members of our society. Poverty places daunting challenges on low-income families and individuals to receive regular access to health care. Finding affordable continual coverage for people with chronic diseases is a critical concern.

As providers of services and care, both physical and spiritual, our members, congregations, and institutions, including religiously affiliated health care providers, are well acquainted with the importance of providing access to health care for all people. All individuals, regardless of their age, income, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, race or ethnicity, geography, employment status, or health status, deserve equal access to quality, affordable, inclusive, and accountable health care. Reducing health care options for some based on any of these factors is profoundly unjust.

- More than one-half of all Americans suffer from one or more chronic diseases, and the U.S. spends more than 1.3 trillion dollars annually in treatment of these diseases.⁴⁸ Chronic diseases are driving Medicare costs up and account for 70% of all deaths and 75% of all health care costs.⁴⁹
- Recent data show that young people aged 13-29 account for over one-third of the estimated 50,000 new HIV infections diagnosed each year -- the largest share of any population group and the only age group in which HIV incidence is growing.⁵⁰
- More than 20% of persons with severe disabilities in America rely on Medicaid as their sole source of comprehensive health and long-term care coverage,⁵¹ giving them access to essential services, including transportation, medical care, and personal care assistance.
- Medicare covers 49 million Americans, half of whom had annual incomes below \$22,000 and half of whom had savings below \$53,000 in 2010.⁵²

B. Prevention and Public Health

The prevalence of largely preventable diseases, such as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes, has increased in the United States. Congress recognized the potential to improve population health by working to address these preventable diseases in the Affordable Care Act.⁵³ The Act addresses poor health outcomes by improving access to care, making care and coverage more affordable, encouraging preventive care, and increasing the supply of primary care providers.⁵⁴

1. Prevention and Public Health Fund

The Prevention and Public Health Fund was created to support public health infrastructure and to support community-based public health and prevention work. The creation of the Fund is the first time a comprehensive public health strategy with dedicated funding has been articulated in federal law.⁵⁵ The Fund is vital for public health professionals addressing obesity, reducing tobacco use, and improving access to preventive care services in communities.

The Affordable Care Act allocated the prevention fund with \$15 billion over its first 10 years. The recent decision by Congress to divest \$5 billion from the Prevention and Public Health Fund as a temporary solution to the Medicare Physician payment rate will undermine what the Affordable Care Act was intended to do -- transform our nation's health care system from a "sick care" system to one that emphasizes prevention and wellness. The Prevention and Public Health Fund empowers communities to support longer, healthier, more productive lives by preventing costly medical conditions, improving protection agencies' capacities to detect and control threats, and identifying and monitoring the health system's successes and challenges.⁵⁶

2. HIV and AIDS

Research shows that well-designed, well-implemented, school-based HIV and sexually transmitted infection (STI) prevention programs significantly reduce sexual risk behaviors among students. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Division of Adolescent and School Health (DASH) supports such HIV prevention efforts, providing critical resources

and technical assistance needed to reach our nation's 56 million students. Despite continued need, DASH has not been given a funding increase in more than 10 years and was even cut by 25% last year.

Another program crucial in the fight against HIV and other STIs is the CDC Division of Sexually Transmitted Disease Prevention (DSTDP). Young people aged 15-25 contract almost half of the 19 million STIs diagnosed annually, though they comprise only one-quarter of the sexually active population.⁵⁷ DSTDP helps communities respond with effective STI prevention efforts by supporting health departments, providers, and NGOs with leadership, research, scientific information, and policy development.

The National HIV/AIDS Strategy offers a vision that the United States will become a place where new HIV infections are rare and where every affected individual, regardless of age, gender, race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity or socioeconomic circumstance, will have unfettered access to high-quality, life-extending care, free from stigma and discrimination.⁵⁸

3. Address Long-Term Care Needs

Over 10 million Americans rely on long-term care and supports to assist them with daily activities. As the American population continues to age, the need for long-term care services will only increase. With the reversal of the Community Living Assistance Services and Supports (CLASS) Act, Congress must find a way to address this growing concern.

Nancy, who lives in Texas, has a 33-year-old son named Austin with Down syndrome. He qualifies for Medicaid, and she says it is critical to his quality of life. It enables him to live on his own by providing home- and community-based services. The waiting list in Texas for those services is 8-10 years, so Austin is very fortunate to now be receiving them. He lives in a duplex, and the person who assists him lives on the other side. They check in on him, are close by at night and monitor his medications. Austin has a job in the mailroom of a law firm, where he works full-time. He has health insurance through his job, but his health care coverage under Medicaid is an important backup.

A Faithful Budget will:

- Fully fund the Affordable Care Act to continue to transform our nation's current health care system into one that is focused on prevention and wellness.
- Restore funding to the Prevention and Public Health Fund.
- Address shortages in primary care so that expanded access to care does not result in increased hardship in access to care for vulnerable populations.
- Address Medicare physician payments and find ways to permanently fix the sustainable growth rate (SGR) so that it does not disrupt or eliminate health care access for seniors, those with disabilities, and military families.
- Encourage efficiencies by ensuring greater access to generic drugs, investing in health technology, measuring effective care, and rooting out fraud, waste, and abuse.
- Invest in programs and services like DASH and DSTDP that help avert the spread of HIV and other STIs, particularly among our nation's young people.
- Support prevention and treatment activities to reduce HIV and AIDS incidence and increase access to care.
- Restore funding for long-term care.

C. Honoring Commitments to Low-Income and Disabled Children and Adults

Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) together provide comprehensive health coverage for nearly 60 million (1 in 5) Americans, including low-income women, men, and children, the elderly, and people with disabilities. Medicaid serves people in virtually every aspect of health care at each stage of life from the delivery of nearly 40% of all newborns.⁵⁹ Medicaid most closely fulfills the moral imperative to care for those in our communities who are sick or poor.

Currently, Medicaid and CHIP are need-based programs, jointly funded and administered in federal-state partnerships, and available to all persons who meet income eligibility criteria. Restructuring this program by capping funds flowing to states and/or creating block grant formulas would result in the denial of health insurance and long-term care to needy and vulnerable Americans. During our current recession, Medicaid enrollment grew by 7 million people from 2007 to 2010,⁶⁰ demonstrating that the program was doing what it was designed to do -- serve as the health care safety net for low-income and vulnerable populations. While federal expenses may be reduced by capped funds or block grants, the costs would simply be shifted to states, patients, and providers⁶¹ -- a reality which would inevitably negatively impact health care access for "the least of these" in our nation.

A Faithful Budget will:

- Preserve Medicaid as a federal-state partnership in which all persons who meet the income criteria have access to needed health care.
- Avoid creating formulas for block grants to states which cap the federal funds available even as the need for assistance increases.
- Maintain commitments made in the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act (CHIPRA) and reflect a fair and sustainable system to compensate doctors and providers that provide services to Medicaid recipients.

Janet's son Brian sustained a traumatic brain injury in a car accident at the age of 20 in 1985. He is currently being cared for in his own subsidized apartment and has round-the-clock caregivers paid for through Virginia Medicaid. Janet and her husband are in their 70s and say that this living arrangement for Brian is the best they've had in all the years since his injury. His assistants stay with him overnight and help him get out in the community regularly, to the recreation center for exercise, and to other activities that help him stay involved in life.

They are grateful for the arrangement that Medicaid provides their son, and yet as they confront the limitations of their own aging, they are increasingly concerned for his future. There have not found any other viable options for Brian in the community. Nursing home environments provide caregivers that look after 10 or 12 patients at a time and are geared toward elderly individuals rather than people like Brian.

D. Honoring Commitments to Our Elders

Medicare is the primary source of health insurance for our nation's older adults. The program includes 8 million persons under age 65 who have disabilities.⁶² Because Medicare is a form of

health insurance approved by Americans and its elected officials, it reflects a compact across generations. Any reductions or increased cost-sharing which compromises access to needed health care for Medicare enrollees violates this compact.

Since its enactment, Medicare has been modified and expanded to address new needs. In the years immediately preceding the passage of the Affordable Act, the largest expansion was the enactment of Medicare Part D, which established prescription drug benefits for enrollees. When Medicare Part D was enacted, the program was prevented from negotiating with pharmaceutical companies for bulk pricing, even though such negotiations are permitted for the Department of Veterans' Affairs and Medicaid. Another provision in Part D created the so-called "doughnut hole" or gap in coverage. This occurs when Medicare beneficiaries reach a drug benefit threshold, after which seniors must continue to pay premiums but receive no coverage. The Affordable Care Act includes provisions to close the doughnut hole, initially with rebates to those who reach this gap, then with discounts, and finally by closing the gap completely.

A Faithful Budget will:

- Address the costs of prescription drugs for Medicare beneficiaries, including, but not limited to, allowing Congress to negotiate lower prices for prescription drugs for enrollees.
- Protect the progress of the Affordable Care Act in closing the prescription drug gap (doughnut hole), which limits access to needed medications.
- Reflect a fair and sustainable system to compensate doctors and providers that provide services to Medicare beneficiaries.
- Avoid raising the age of eligibility for Medicare.

E. Honoring Our Commitment to Women's Health

Women, in particular, struggle to find affordable health insurance coverage that covers the benefits they require and health care services that are responsive to all their health needs. Women are more likely than men to struggle to pay medical bills.

Consider that in 2010, 17 million women -- approximately 1 in 7 -- were living in poverty. That same year, more than 7 million women, or about 1 in 15, lived in extreme poverty, meaning their income was below half of the federal poverty line. Among women who head families, 4 in 10 (or 40.7 percent) lived in poverty in 2010.⁶³ In 2011, nearly 1 in 4 women nationwide reported not visiting a doctor due to high costs.⁶⁴

According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, "More than one-third of women (35%) have a chronic condition that requires ongoing medical attention, such as diabetes or hypertension. Even among younger women, approximately one in 10 women of reproductive age (18 to 44 years) say they have been diagnosed with arthritis (9%), hypertension (11%), or high cholesterol (9%), and by the time women reach their middle years (45 to 64 years), these rates triple."⁶⁵

Millions of women who have low income, are uninsured, or otherwise lack access to consistent and adequate health services rely on government programs for quality care -- such as cancer

screenings, pap smears, maternal health, pelvic exams, HIV/STI screening, and other basic primary care.

A Faithful Budget will:

- Ensure sufficient funding for quality health care programs that provide women with the care they need and deserve.

F. Honoring Our Commitment to the Health of Underserved Populations

Persistent and well-documented health disparities exist between different racial and ethnic populations, and health equity remains elusive. Health disparities -- differences in health outcomes that are closely linked with social, economic, and environmental disadvantage -- are often driven by the social conditions in which individuals live, learn, work, and play. Racial and ethnic minorities constitute about one-third of the U.S. population but make up more than half of the 50 million people who are uninsured.⁶⁶ In addition, youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) are more likely than their peers to have health challenges, some of which “are associated with social and structural inequities, such as the stigma and discrimination that LGBT populations experience.”⁶⁷

“It is time to refocus, reinforce, and repeat the message that health disparities exist and that health equity benefits everyone.”

*-Kathleen G. Sebelius,
Secretary,
Health & Human Services*

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) has several provisions that address health disparities as a priority -- investing in prevention and wellness, awarding community transformation grants, developing research priorities, gathering accurate data, and evaluating community preventive services. Two important initiatives mandated by the ACA are the National Strategy for Quality Improvement in Health Care and the National Prevention and Health Promotion Strategy. Several other national initiatives for reducing disparities include Healthy People 2020, Let’s Move, improving access to health care for American Indians and Alaska Natives, and the National HIV/AIDS Strategy.⁶⁸ All of these initiatives will strengthen and improve the health of racial, ethnic, and other vulnerable populations, thereby improving health and health care for all.

Community Transformation Grants assist and empower communities to work with existing health agencies to develop culturally sensitive programs to achieve their intended outcomes -- reducing and impacting leading chronic disease causes and risk factors. Another proven solution for better returns in health care delivery, especially for racial and ethnic and other vulnerable groups, is the community health center. Community health centers are a key component of the nation’s health care safety net, as they provide one-quarter of all primary care visits for the nation’s low-income population and generate \$24 billion in annual savings.⁶⁹ Evidence shows that these centers will serve ever-larger numbers of patients who have complex health problems and are at a higher risk for poor health outcomes than the general public.⁷⁰

A Faithful Budget will:

- Ensure continued investment in developing new and effective strategies that reach underserved populations to reduce and/or eliminate racial, ethnic, and other health disparities.
- Address the critical shortage of health centers and support the creation of new health center sites across the country, especially in communities where underserved populations exist.
- Continue to make improvements to the Indian Health Service by increasing access to health care services.

IV. A FAITHFUL BUDGET FOR HUMANITARIAN AND POVERTY-FOCUSED INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE

A. Introduction

1. The Imperative of Compassion, the Wisdom of Aid

Many of our global neighbors experience daily struggles for basic food, shelter, and health care upon which their lives depend. Americans who have visited impoverished countries know the challenging and sometimes horrific conditions facing populations and the incredible courage of our sisters and brothers living in such circumstances. As we have seen their pain, so, too, have we experienced their generosity -- sharing their limited homes and food with their American guests. Our own generosity must not fail them.

Even in challenging economic times, the wealth of the United States enables us to express love for our neighbors by reaching out in compassion and justice to children, women, and men around the world who are impoverished, hungry, thirsty, and homeless. In one form or another, all our faith traditions tell us that “to whom much is given, much shall be required.”

Humanitarian and poverty-focused international assistance is vital to global human security. It helps prevent conflict, saves money, and lays the groundwork for economic growth. Robust, well-targeted foreign assistance will save millions of lives, build self-reliance among the world’s most vulnerable, and benefit the United States by helping create a more secure world.

International assistance also facilitates democratic governance accountable to its populace. By helping developing nations address issues such as hunger, health, and education, it empowers a productive constituent base to which the government becomes accountable. True human and global security exist when good governance sustains the development made possible by foreign assistance.

Increasing America’s commitment to our neighbors in need here at home and around the world means making choices about our national priorities. Certainly, we cannot do everything. But our priorities should seek to restore our country’s historic commitment to lifting up our neighbors in need and making the world a more secure place for everyone.

2. How Much Should the U.S. Give?

Public opinion surveys show that most Americans think that foreign aid is 20-30 percent of the U.S. federal budget. When asked how much the U.S. should give, most people answer 5 to 10 percent. Others say that the U.S. should give a tithe, or 10 percent, to help lift up the world’s hungry and impoverished people.⁷¹

The United States is the richest country in the world. While we lead other nations in the dollar amount of international assistance that it provides, America is at the bottom of developed countries in the percentage of its resources given to help alleviate international hunger and poverty. On average, wealthy countries give 0.45 percent of their gross domestic product (GDP),

more than twice as much as the United States. U.S. humanitarian and poverty-focused international assistance represents less than 1 percent of the federal budget and only 0.2 percent (2/10 of 1 percent) of the U.S. GDP. This assistance funds solutions whose benefits to life, global health, education, prosperity, and development far exceed their costs.

From a perspective of religious faith, this represents an unnecessary moral failure for us as a nation. Our faith tells us that it is not the specific amount given that pleases God but the proportion of what we give to what we have (Luke 21:1-4). That is what separates generosity and selfishness.

3. The 0.7 Percent Goal

Some wealthy developed nations have committed themselves to working toward a goal of providing 0.7 percent (7/10 of 1 percent) of their gross domestic product (GDP) to international humanitarian and development assistance to low-income countries and impoverished communities. Communities of faith in the United States and throughout the world have supported this goal and called on wealthy nations, including the United States, to be serious about achieving it.

A handful of wealthy countries have already met this standard, and the United States is not among them. The U.S. GDP is around \$14 trillion. If the U.S. committed 0.7 percent to development aid, it would provide approximately \$100 billion annually to the world's hungry and impoverished people. This would be approximately 4 percent of our U.S. federal budget, still a small part of total U.S. spending.

Though precise definitions vary, current U.S. bilateral and multilateral humanitarian and poverty-focused international assistance totals around \$22 billion annually. This amount is about one-fifth of what is needed to achieve agreed global development goals. By way of comparison, U.S. military spending for FY2012 is more than \$733 billion.

4. The Millennium Development Goals

In 2000, the nations of the world, including the United States, adopted a set of goals to reduce hunger and poverty throughout the world and spur sustainable human development. Among these Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and empowering women, reducing child mortality rates, improving maternal health, combating HIV-AIDS, malaria and other diseases, and ensuring environmental sustainability.

Progress has been made in some of these areas, primarily as a result of major economic growth in China and India. But sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and regions of North Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, and the Caribbean, while showing some small improvement in some areas, are falling far short of achieving targets set out for 2015.

If wealthy nations provided 0.7 percent of their national income for reducing hunger, poverty, and preventable diseases around the world, the MDG targets would be within reach.

Reflecting the Need:

Globally --

- 1.4 billion people live in extreme poverty on less than \$1.25 a day.⁷²
- One billion people are hungry, lacking sufficient food.⁷³
- Almost one billion lack safe drinking water, 3.5 million people die each year from water-related disease, and 2.5 billion lack adequate sanitation.⁷⁴
- Natural disasters, including floods, earthquakes, tsunamis, and hurricanes, as well as manmade disasters and conflicts, have led to the displacement of an estimated 50 million⁷⁵ and 27.5 million people,⁷⁶ respectively, around the world.
- Approximately 12,000 people die every day from HIV and AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis.⁷⁷
- More than 1.5 billion people live in fragile and conflict-affected states or in countries with very high levels of criminal violence.⁷⁸

In particular, the following forms of international aid should be increased.

B. Global Hunger, Agricultural Development, and Nutrition

Approximately 1 billion people worldwide are hungry. Each year, 3.4 million children die from inadequate nutrition.⁷⁹ Hunger is an obstacle to progress: it increases susceptibility to disease, hinders learning, and leaves a person weak and unable to work or meet family needs. Hunger inhibits developing economies and creates poverty. New scientific research confirms that infants who fail to receive adequate nutrition in the first 1,000 days from conception to 2 years old suffer from impaired brain development that will profoundly affect them for the rest of their lives.

The U.S. Agency for International Development recently helped 2,000 women shallot farmers in Mali increase their yield by 27 percent and double their revenue. Although it may seem small, these gains mean the potential for families to have more consistent and more nutritious food for generations to come.

Source: http://geneva.usmission.gov/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/FTFcs4_mali.pdf

Food security means having access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. Emergency food aid is a life-or-death matter for millions of children, women, and men in crisis situations around the world, and a Faithful Budget should respond with compassion and generosity. The goal of a Faithful Budget must be ending hunger and malnutrition by addressing the underlying causes.

A Faithful Budget will:

- Increase funding for community-based international agricultural development and seek to help smallholder farmers.
- Support nutrition and nutrition-sensitive programs that help ensure pregnant mothers and infants receive extra nutrition when they need it.

C. Education

Sixty-seven million children currently lack access to quality education around the world, and more than half of them are girls.⁸⁰ In sub-Saharan Africa alone, 10 million children drop out of primary school every year.⁸¹ Twenty-seven million children in conflict-affected countries are out of school, and the education systems in these countries are not providing youths with skills they need to escape the cycle of poverty and unemployment that ravages their countries.⁸² Nearly 200 million children currently experience malnutrition.⁸³ The largest contributing factor for reducing child malnutrition has been improving the education of women.⁸⁴

Investing in education saves lives: worldwide, 700,000 HIV cases could be prevented each year if all children received a primary education.¹ Universal secondary education for girls in sub-Saharan Africa could save as many as 1.8 million lives annually.² Investing in education is critical to enhancing global security: in sub-Saharan Africa, where more than 40% of the population is under 18, an additional year of schooling reduces an adolescent boy's risk of becoming involved in conflict by 20%.³

¹ Global Campaign for Education. Learning to Survive: How Education for All would save millions of young people from HIV/AIDS, 2008.

² UNESCO, Education for All Global Monitoring Report, 2011
<http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/ED/pdf/gmr2011-gender-overview.pdf>
<http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/ED/pdf/gmr2011-gender-overview.pdf>

³ Save the Children. Where Peace Begins, 2008

Investing in education has transformative economic benefits for countries and communities: education increases a person's wages approximately 10%. For girls, the rate of return for one additional year of primary school is as high as 15%.⁸⁵ Just 4 years of primary-level schooling can boost a farmer's productivity by 9%.⁸⁶

A Faithful Budget will:

- Fully fund bilateral programs through the U.S. Agency for International Development.
- Fully fund multilateral education initiatives such as the Global Partnership for Education.

D. Clean Water and Sanitation

Eighty percent of sicknesses in the developing world, and the deaths of 4,500 children daily, trace back to contaminated water and inadequate sanitation. Clean water is key to every other aspect of development -- from children's education to food production, energy development, economic growth, and environmental sustainability. But nearly 1 billion people still lack access to clean water and 2.5 billion people are without basic sanitation.

WaterSHED-Asia is a partnership led by the University of North Carolina's Gilling School of Global Public Health and supported by USAID to bring affordable water and sanitation projects to three countries in Southeast Asia. This project is benefiting more than 1,100 villages, increasing the number of households with access to clean water from 20% to 75%. By removing the need for community members to travel 1 km to fetch water daily, time will be freed up for other activities and community health will improve. In addition, by constructing latrines at six schools and providing water treatment for 38 schools, educational success stands to increase, benefiting 20,000 students and helping to lift families and communities out of poverty.

Without decisive action by the United States and others, water problems will almost certainly increase regional tensions, exacerbate instability, and contribute to the existence of failed states.

Because water is basic to all of life and humans flourishing, investments in water yield broad-based results.

The World Health Organization concludes that every dollar invested in clean water and sanitation yields \$8 of increased productivity and decreased health costs. America's global outreach is bringing millions of people improved access to water and sanitation every year.

A Faithful Budget will:

- Invest in increased access to clean water and sanitation throughout the world.

E. HIV and AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria

While data have not yet been released, if past trends continue, we estimate that approximately 4 million people in Africa are currently receiving HIV/AIDS medication, up from only 50,000 people in 2002. Treatment for tuberculosis has also become more available -- nearly 32 million cases of TB were treated between 1995 and 2008.

Progress is also being made in preventing the spread of these three diseases. 88 million bed nets to protect families from malaria have been delivered by the Global Fund alone, and over half a million pregnant women with HIV received medicine to prevent passing the virus on to their babies (up from only 150,000 women in 2004).

---The One Campaign

In spite of progress being made toward the eradication of HIV and AIDS, approximately 34 million people have the disease and 1.8 million related deaths were recorded in 2010. Women now compose half of the world's HIV and AIDS cases. Even though almost 7 million people are receiving treatment, more than half of the people who need antiretroviral therapy in low- and middle-income countries are still unable to access it.

There are 12 million people living with tuberculosis and more than 94 million current cases of malaria. Every year, millions of people perish needlessly from these illnesses.

A Faithful Budget will:

- Include the highest levels of funding for AIDS, tuberculosis (TB), and malaria as a part of the Global Health Initiative.
- Make a strong commitment to the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the multilateral Global Fund for AIDS, TB, and Malaria.

F. International Disaster Assistance (IDA)

The human toll of disasters around the world begs for thoughtful compassion from the American people. Natural disasters, including floods, earthquakes, tsunamis, and hurricanes, as well as manmade disasters and conflicts, have led to the displacement of an estimated 50 million⁸⁷ and 27.5 million people⁸⁸, respectively, around the world. Through the International Disaster Assistance (IDA) account, the American people are supporting the emergency needs of these women, children, and men in places like the Horn of Africa, Sudan

IDA funds assist people suffering the effects of natural and man-made disasters and provide for emergency needs of vulnerable and displaced people. For example, since 2004, USAID/OFDA has been providing assistance to humanitarian organizations working in Sudan and South Sudan, including help for tens of thousands of people stranded during their return process, as well as food, health care, and other basic necessities for returnees and displaced populations.¹

¹Foreign Aid: The Right Choice, Refugees International. <http://www.refugeesinternational.org/node/4629>. Accessed 28 Feb 2012.

and South Sudan, and elsewhere. The resulting water, food, health care, nutritional supports, sanitation, and humanitarian protection in these crises and protracted displacement situations are critical to saving lives in times of greatest need.

A Faithful Budget will:

- Provide robust funding for the International Disaster Assistance account to ensure resources are in place both to provide life-saving aid in ongoing disasters and conflicts and to meaningfully respond to future disasters.

G. Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA)

With the help of MRA funds, refugee camps in Nepal provide 65,000 Lhotshampas refugees fleeing persecution the bare minimums of a roof over their head, food, and water and the opportunity to apply for refugee status in countries including the U.S. Sharman Upreti is one such refugee, resettled in Idaho after years in a Nepalese camp. "My future will be successful if I work hard," he says. Sharman hopes his son will become a social worker to give back to the country that took his family in. "I want to make my baby a good citizen of the United States," he says.¹

¹Davlin, Melissa, "Eager for Resettlement, Refugees Endure harsh Lives in Nepal's Camps". Times News. http://magicvalley.com/lifestyles/relationships-and-special-occasions/eager-for-resettlement-refugees-endure-harsh-lives-in-nepal-s/article_8e94fb94-6d2f-11e0-9e64-001cc4c002e0.html. Accessed 28 Feb 2012.

More than 15 million refugees worldwide⁸⁹ have been forced to leave behind their homes to flee persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. Mitigation and Refugee Assistance (MRA) funds supply basic life-saving assistance and protection to these refugees who continue to live in displacement, including the quickly growing urban refugee population, as well as refugees from countries like Bhutan, Burma, and Somalia whose displacement remains protracted. For refugees who have no other option than to be resettled, MRA funds enable the U.S. to be a global leader, resettling a goal of 76,000 refugees this year⁹⁰. While this option is available to less than 1% of the world's total refugee population, these funds provide to the most vulnerable of the world a safe

haven and a place to call home. In addition, the draw-down account, Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance (ERMA), allows the State Department to respond to emergency displacements and should be fully funded at its authorized level.

A Faithful Budget will:

- Fully fund Migration and Refugee Assistance programs.
- Fully fund the Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance draw-down account.

H. Adaptation to Global Climate Change

For people living in the world's most vulnerable developing countries, climate change is a stern reality. They are already suffering from these changes, which have resulted in floods, droughts, famine, sea-level rise, and increased levels of diseases and disease vectors. For

Rosemary Mayiga, a rural farmer in Uganda, revolutionized rural farming practices when she discovered the value of a tarp. With an increase in sporadic rains and new challenges in growing crops, Rosemary knew she needed to do something to help her farming co-operative keep food growing and money in the hands of local families. Lutheran World Relief provided up-front funding for Rosemary and other farmers to invest in tarps and containers for holding water. This way, when the water fell, farmers could capture it and use it at the necessary time. Small investments like this can help communities adapt to the impacts of climate change that would otherwise wreak havoc on their lives and livelihoods.

them, preparing for and adapting to climate change is a matter of survival, not speculation.

For example, in the Horn of Africa, more than 12 million people are struggling to survive in this time of extended drought and famine. As climate change continues, other regions of the world will continue to suffer. Adaptation assistance can prevent the severity and long-term impacts of climate change.

Helping impoverished countries adapt to the consequences of climate change is a matter of compassionate caring for the most vulnerable among us. It is also a moral responsibility, because America is the world's largest historical emitter of greenhouse gas emissions and a leading contributor to the changes in climate that are ravaging our neighbors around the world.

In addition to adaptation assistance, mitigation efforts are needed to assist developing nations in utilizing low-carbon alternatives that reduce greenhouse gas emissions. These may include funding for solar panels in villages, local wind turbines, and other creative solutions to limit the dependence on fossil fuels in communities struggling with energy poverty.

A Faithful Budget will:

- Include adequate funding for international adaptation and mitigation efforts that are related specifically to addressing global climate change in the world's most vulnerable developing nations.

I. Conclusion

A Faithful Budget will respond with compassion and justice for our neighbors in need around the world. For FY2013, we urge Congress to take a small step toward that commitment by increasing bilateral and multilateral aid to our global neighbors in need by at least 10 percent over FY2012 funding levels. Even with a 10-percent increase, poverty-focused aid will still constitute less than 1 percent of the U.S. budget.

In addition, we call on Congress and Administration to take seriously the goal of ramping up humanitarian and poverty-focused international assistance in the years ahead to reach 0.7 percent of our national income (GDP) or 4 percent of the federal budget.

V. A FAITHFUL BUDGET FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND TRUE HUMAN SECURITY

A. Introduction

A Faithful Budget invests in a world that respects the rights of all persons and seeks a security built not on a culture of fear and violence but rather on relationship and community. The past decade has seen the United States spend vast resources on wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, both in massive off-budget spending directly for these wars and in a doubling of the base military budget since 1998. Well over half the discretionary budget is now directed towards defense spending. A Faithful Budget seeks peace and stability through deeper investment in long-term human security, both in our communities at home and in communities around the world.

Additionally, government resources are wasted by apprehending, detaining, and deporting immigrants who are making a positive contribution to our society by working, providing for their families, and paying taxes. Instead, Congress should save funds and serve the best interests of our society by enacting immigration reform so that immigrants can earn their legal status and increase the many ways they contribute economically, socially, and civically to the United States.

Furthermore, the United States devotes extensive resources to imprisoning far more people than any other nation in the world.⁹¹ The millions of people who are directly impacted by this explosive rate of incarceration include families and communities of the incarcerated. Meanwhile, in-prison educational and skills programs and post-incarceration re-entry programs are haphazard, underfunded, and often nonexistent, undermining public safety and making it extremely difficult for ex-offenders to become full, contributing members of society. The purpose of the criminal justice system should be to acknowledge wrongs through the restoration of right relationships between individuals and communities.

Reflecting the Need:

- Since 2001, the United States has spent more than 1.3 trillion dollars in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq alone -- spending that has taken place off the budgetary books, contributing directly and significantly to the current federal debt.⁹²
- Research has indicated that investing in conflict prevention is 60 times more cost effective than intervening after violence has begun. Yet the United States invests less than 2% of its income taxes on civilian intervention and 39% on the military.⁹³
- Deportations have peaked to 400,000, including more than 100,000 parents of U.S. citizen children in the past ten years.⁹⁴ Over the past two decades, funding for border militarization and internal enforcement has drastically increased by more than 500 percent⁹⁵ despite evidence that this build-up has not been effective in preventing undocumented immigration.⁹⁶
- In 2009, a record 183,986 suspects were arrested for federal offenses, up from 140,200 in 2005 and nearly double the 83,324 suspects arrested in 1995.⁹⁷
- While the United States leads the world in military spending, we are at or below the median among the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development on reading, scientific, and math proficiency and near the bottom for infant mortality and child poverty.⁹⁸

The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., said, “A true revolution of values will lay hand on the world order and say of war, ‘This way of settling differences is not just.’ [...] A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death [...] America, the richest and most powerful nation in the world, can well lead the way in this revolution of values. There is nothing except a tragic death wish to prevent us from reordering our priorities so that the pursuit of peace will take precedence over the pursuit of war.”⁹⁹ We can, if we so choose, invest in a different way of relating and interacting with our brothers and sisters around the world.

Global threats to peace and security need not instill a national inclination to make an imbalanced investment in new weapons systems, detention centers, and militarized border walls, leading to disproportionate spending on the mechanisms of war and enforcement, while we become less secure in so many other ways. We have the opportunity to invest in a different way of leading the world, seeking relationship and community rather than living out of fear and violence, by investing in infrastructure focused on preventing violence globally and meeting the challenges of a complex world with more sophisticated tools of influence and engagement.

B. Recognizing the Cost of War

For many Americans, the cost of war over the last decade has not been recognized, but for others, the personal cost has been far too great. As a nation, we ignored the financial cost of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan by putting into place an off-budget process of accounting. Additionally, with less than one percent of the population on active military duty, there is a growing gap in understanding the impact of war on those who serve.¹⁰⁰

The first and most immediate step that can be taken is putting military and defense spending under the same scrutiny as all other federal expenditures. Between 31 and 60 billion dollars were lost to waste and fraud related to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.¹⁰¹ The exact figure is unknown because, under current guidelines, the Pentagon is the only federal agency which is exempt from producing auditable financial documents. Developing a mechanism to track defense spending would help find ways to reduce spending which will not put our armed forces under further strain or leave them more vulnerable in the field.¹⁰²

The United States should also continue to invest in our service members and their families once they return home. The cost of war for these men and women does not end just because they return to the battlefield. In January of 2012, the U.S. Army reported that 22 active duty soldiers had committed suicide, a troubling trend line that is on the rise. According to data from the Department of Veterans Affairs, more than 6,000 veterans committed suicide in 2009.¹⁰³ Investing in our veterans when they return home must become a priority.

A Faithful Budget that recognizes the total cost of war will:

- Call for a mechanism to track defense spending, enabling effective and strategic cuts to spending that do not place our men and women in the field at increased risk of harm.
- Invest in our veterans as they make the transition home by supporting jobs initiatives, investing in veteran caregivers, and providing vital mental health and suicide prevention services.

C. Investing in Human Security

The United States also has the ability to invest in a different vision of security -- one built on the prevention of conflict and on peaceful relationships with the global community. The cost of two drone strikes in Pakistan is equivalent to a two-year conflict management program in Iraq that trained more than 1,600 conflict mediators. For the cost of 10 service members in Afghanistan for a year, a 20-member Civilian Response Corps (CRC) team helped lead to the peaceful referendum process that created South Sudan.¹⁰⁴

The Complex Crisis Fund is a crucial source of unprogrammed, innovative, and flexible funding for civilian agencies without which the U.S. Department of State and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) would be less capable of acting quickly when conflicts escalate or undertaking rapid stabilization, prevention, and crisis response activities. The Conflict Stabilization Operations account funds the CRC and the former State Department's Office for the Coordinator of Reconstruction and Stabilization, which focuses on preventing deadly conflict by assessing and planning an effective response to countries struggling with or at risk from conflict or civil strife. USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives supports programs that help fragile or conflict-prone countries transition to peace and stability. Additionally, professional, well-equipped international peacekeepers reduce the burden on the U.S. by acting as a key stabilizing force throughout the globe. All of these programs are underfunded relative to their ability to impact American security.

A Faithful Budget seeking a vision of true human security will:

- Robustly fund the Complex Crisis Fund, Conflict Stabilization Operations, and the Office of Transition Initiatives while at the same time meeting our global obligations to international peacekeeping efforts.
- Invest in people and organizations using a peaceful means of relating to the world -- the diplomatic core, the United States Institute of Peace, and the United Nations.

D. Creating a World Free of Nuclear Weapons

Our faith traditions are clear in their condemnation of weapons of mass destruction that can indiscriminately destroy creation. Nuclear weapons, which have the ability to destroy entire cities, nations, and, indeed, all life on earth, exist in opposition to the care for life to which our faiths call us. We are troubled by the trend toward modernizing weapons systems that should be made obsolete.

People of faith have long spoken out against the development, production, possession, acquisition, deployment, use, and threat of the use of nuclear weapons as actions that are not consistent with what we know to be the will and desire of a God of life. The U.S. must take clear steps toward nuclear reductions if we are to be credible in calling other nations to reduce or decline to pursue a nuclear arsenal.

In order to move toward a nuclear free world, a Faithful Budget will:

- Make no new investments in nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction.

- Substantially reduce the number of nuclear armed submarines and aircraft.
- Substantially reduce the number of active warheads in the arsenal of the United States.

E. Stopping Investment in Inhumane Immigration Enforcement Initiatives

Over the last 20 years, the U.S. Border Patrol has experienced a tenfold budget increase and an eightfold increase in time spent patrolling the border.¹⁰⁵ These increases have been matched with statistically insignificant differences in apprehensions and illegal entry and have not contributed to solving our broken immigration system. Instead, these funding increases have resulted in undocumented immigrants resorting to travel through the most dangerous desert areas of Arizona, increased deaths in the desert, and the exploitation of immigrants by coyotes (dangerous smugglers).

At the same time that funding for border militarization has dramatically increased, so has funding for increased criminalization and internal enforcement programs. These programs, including the Secure Communities program, have made survivors of domestic violence and other victims and witnesses afraid to report crimes or testify against perpetrators for fear that they or a loved one will be apprehended, detained, and deported as a result. Local police can best protect the public safety when all community members trust that they can report crimes. Secure Communities and other internal enforcement programs, such as the 287(g) program, run contrary to this community-policing objective.¹⁰⁶ Even by Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) own standards, the program does not meet stipulated policy intent or objectives and has proven detrimental to protecting community safety and constitutional rights¹⁰⁷.

In FY1994, the federal government detained nearly 82,000 migrants. While migration patterns remain relatively constant, in FY2011, that figure skyrocketed to over 363,000 at a cost of \$1.9 billion to U.S. taxpayers, depriving hundreds of thousands of immigrants of their civil and human rights. Violations of these rights, along with denial of adequate medical attention, have been reported, but unnecessary detention has continued to escalate.

A Faithful Budget will:

- Cease unlimited increases in the budget of the Border Patrol for ineffective initiatives such as increased patrols.
- Reduce funding for the Secure Communities program, the employment verification program, and similar programs.
- Find savings by ceasing cooperation with the enforcement of state anti-immigrant laws that encourage racial targeting and force an anti-immigrant lens on local policing.
- Not reduce spending for translation services, tax credits, or other direct services for immigrants.

F. Investing in the Dignity of Immigrants

U.S. foreign assistance to Mexico is overwhelmingly focused on security rather than development and poverty reduction. In 2009, 96 percent of the U.S. State Department assistance to Mexico was directed toward military and police assistance. Job creation projects that reduce

migration pressures totaled \$11.2 million, or .01 percent of total U.S. assistance to Mexico, an overwhelming low percentage of U.S. assistance.¹⁰⁸

In FY2011, immigration detention centers cost \$1.9 billion for U.S. taxpayers, while alternatives to detention programs, including electronic monitoring and regular check-ins with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), cost only \$72 million. The latter programs represent a smarter, cheaper, and more humane way to ensure compliance with U.S. immigration laws.¹⁰⁹

Examining the recent allocation of resources to the immigration courts highlights a deep flaw in the current system. Current funding has proven insufficient to meet the needs of today's immigration courts.¹¹⁰ In addition, applications for adjustment of status for refugees and asylum seekers should be covered by appropriations rather than by fees from other immigrants.

Funding for services for torture victims has remained static for many years, resulting in a demand for services that exceeds resources and has caused programs to close or drastically scale back services. Furthermore, while the number of identified trafficking victims served has risen, funding levels have not risen since the program's inception and service periods are currently too short to allow victims to attain self-sufficiency before losing this life-saving support.

Additional security checks have been applied to refugees seeking admission to the United States as well as to refugees currently in the United States. The implementation of these interagency checks (IACs) has had the unintentional effect of drastically reducing the number of refugees granted protection through the U.S. resettlement program this past fiscal year. As agencies do not currently have sufficient numbers of analysts to review the IACs, more than 14,000 cases were on hold awaiting review (as of September 2011).

A Faithful Budget will:

- Increase its focus on addressing poverty as one of the causes of migration, including poverty reduction and job creation projects that target migrant-sending communities -- particularly in rural zones, where poverty is concentrated.¹¹¹
- Fund efforts to reduce lengthy waits for visa adjudications, to reach out to *pro bono* attorneys to serve immigrants who cannot procure representation, to creatively act to reduce waits for visas by allocating all authorized visas each fiscal year, and to serve in widely and effectively implementing the administration's recent guidance on prosecutorial discretion.
- Provide robust funding for programs that prevent, educate communities about, and serve survivors of human trafficking and torture.
- Invest in successful programs in the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Office of Citizenship, specifically Immigrant Integration and Citizenship grant programs that help immigrants integrate and pursue citizenship.
- Increase funds for the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (OCRCL), specifically to empower the office to proactively protect undocumented immigrants against labor violations and other perpetrators seeking to exploit them.

- Include resources for additional staffing for all security agencies charged with vetting these decisions so that the U.S. refugee program can serve as a protection for refugees fleeing persecution and seeking safety, freedom, and family reunification.
- Increase funding for community-based alternatives to detention programs which are both more humane and fiscally responsible.

G. Ceasing Funding for Programs Focused on Punishment

The United States imprisons far more people than any other nation in the world.¹¹² So many federal rules carry criminal penalties that experts struggle to count them.¹¹³ During 2009, a record 183,986 suspects were arrested for federal offenses, up from 140,200 in 2005 and nearly double the 83,324 suspects arrested in 1995. The increase in incarceration over the past twenty years has stretched the system beyond its limits and placed an unmanageable cost burden on taxpayers. From 1986 to 2006, the total justice expenditures -- federal, state, and local governments -- increased 301%, from \$54 billion to \$214 billion.¹¹⁴ High costs of incarceration are unsustainable in the long term, let alone during times of economic downturn.

The privatization of prison construction incentivizes mass incarceration and consequently increases our already-skyrocketing criminal justice costs. In a March 1997 Securities and Exchange Commission filing, the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) acknowledged that “the rate of construction of new facilities and the Company's potential for growth will depend on a number of factors, including crime rates and sentencing patterns in the United States.”¹¹⁵ Thus, higher profits require more inmates. Since most private prisons operate on a per diem rate for each bed filled, there is a financial incentive to detain more inmates for longer periods of time. This incentive creates a dangerous entanglement between interest in profit and sound public policy.

The Federal Bureau of Prisons holds more than 11,000 prisoners in some form of segregation, including 400 in the federal super-max facility, the U.S. Penitentiary Administrative Maximum.¹¹⁶ Due to the high cost of constructing high-security solitary confinement units and the increased number of staff required to run such units, holding prisoners in solitary confinement is significantly more expensive than keeping them in the general prison population. One study estimated that the average cost per cell of housing an inmate in a super-max prison is \$75,000, as opposed to \$25,000 for housing an inmate in the general prison population.¹¹⁷

“I’d get so frustrated and I never used to do this until I went to prison . . . I’ve got cuts on my arm -- self-inflicted . . . it was stress relief. I didn’t want to kill myself, but I did try. . .”

- Michael James, who spent four years in solitary confinement in Maine while suffering a pre-existing mental illness

A Faithful Budget will:

- Cease investment in privatization of prison construction and management.
- Limit the expensive and destructive practice of solitary confinement (or “segregation”), in which prisoners are held alone in small cells for 23 hours per day and are permitted little or no social interaction for months or even years.

- Invest in humane alternatives that address the mental health needs of prisoners in a way that effectively contributes both to their rehabilitation and to their successful transition back into society.

H. Investing in the Restoration of People and Communities

In-prison educational and skills programs and post-incarceration re-entry programs are haphazard and often nonexistent, undermining public safety and making it extremely difficult for ex-offenders to become full, contributing members of society.

Finally, preventing individuals from committing crimes and entering the criminal justice system at all is an obvious way to cut criminal justice costs. Accordingly, keeping individuals out of our criminal justice system is inevitably linked to wise investments in other “diversion” programs covered in this budget, including housing, health care, and education.

A Faithful Budget will:

- Invest our tax dollars in spiritual, education, and skills programs during and after prison that promote hope and change.
- Invest in the recommendations of a newly established National Criminal Justice Commission, including reforms to prevent, deter, and reduce crime and violence and improve cost-effectiveness.

VI. A FAITHFUL BUDGET FOR ALL OF CREATION

A. Introduction

A Faithful Budget must encompass a reverence for our created environment, making choices that protect our air, water, and land -- the entirety of Creation.

Our faith traditions teach us that we have been entrusted by God to care for Creation for this generation and for generations to come. We live in a deeply interconnected world where the gifts of clear air, water, and majestic, wild spaces, teeming with diverse life, must be protected. We must honor and sustain these gifts, not just for our use and enjoyment but also because of their intrinsic worth. Just as we are called to heal and care for one another, so, too, are we called to help heal the Earth so that humankind and all of Creation may sustainably coexist.

Yet we have failed to serve as good caretakers and protectors for much of Creation. We have degraded the essential goodness of our natural environment and threatened the health and well-being of countless families and communities around the world. We have relied on dirty fossil fuels that emit climate-altering carbon emissions into the atmosphere, wreaking havoc on our already-fragile ecosystems. A Faithful Budget provides sufficient resources to protect all the life-sustaining gifts of Creation and reflects a commitment to healing the brokenness between people and the rest of the created world.

Reflecting the Need:

- Clean air is necessary for life, yet 154.5 million individuals live in areas of the country with unhealthy levels of ozone or particle pollution.¹¹⁸
- Our unique and precious system of public lands provides a home for our fellow creatures and supports the whole of Creation; however, without sufficient funding for wise management, these lands may not be available for future generations. .
- 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 water infrastructure and maintain a high level of water quality.
- Human-induced global climate change, which threatens the health and well-being of all of Creation, particularly the most vulnerable among us, is perpetuated by the use of carbon-intensive energy sources such as coal and oil, the prime energy sources in the United States.

As people of faith, we are called to be present in places where the need is great and to advocate for a just and sustainable world. As a reflection of our nation's priorities, a Faithful Budget must address injustice and relieve suffering in all of these ways.

B. Protect Life-Sustaining Gifts of Air and Water

All human beings deserve access to the gifts of Creation that are necessary for life -- clean air and clean water. Over the past four decades, great progress has been made in cleaning up the air and waterways of this nation. Enforced by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), landmark laws, including the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act, have greatly improved the health and quality of life of millions of our brothers and sisters. A Faithful Budget provides the

necessary resources for enforcement of these statutes. In addition, a Faithful Budget should provide for improvement of these statutes as we learn more about the external factors that affect the quality of air and water to ensure a healthy future for all our communities and families.

Despite progress since the enactment of the Clean Air Act, over half of all U.S. residents live in areas of the country with unhealthy levels of air pollution.¹¹⁹ The public health risks of such pollution fall heavily on the most vulnerable among us -- children, the elderly, communities of color, and those already suffering ill health. The rapidly rising rate of asthma in children is particularly alarming: according to the Center for Disease Control, one in ten children in the U.S. currently lives with asthma. These statistics demand continued and sufficient funding for new and existing clean air protections.

The Clean Water Act and Safe Drinking Water Act help ensure that our water supply is clean and reliable. While we are grateful for the progress made since enactment of these landmark laws, we continue to witness destruction of waterways and the erosion of critical water infrastructure. In addition, the Clean Water State Revolving Fund and the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund are both critical mechanisms providing matching funds for state and municipal agencies to maintain water quality. Billions of dollars will be needed in the coming decades to maintain current high levels of water quality in the United States.

A Faithful Budget will:

- Equip the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and our public health officials with the resources and tools needed to reduce pollution and mitigate its consequences.
- Protect the EPA's regulatory authority and funding while rejecting harmful policy riders that impose policy restrictions through the simplified voting process under budget rules.
- Heal those disproportionately impacted communities whose health has suffered as a direct result of air- and water-polluting industries and energy projects and ensure funding for a transparent and comprehensive assessment of new energy projects before they are approved.
- Provide critical funding for the Clean Water Act and Safe Drinking Water Act to ensure that our water supply is clean and reliable.

C. Celebrate the Goodness of Creation

Our faith traditions teach that we are merely custodians of God's lands. We are grateful that past generations saw fit to set aside a portion of our national territory as public space or protected lands that nourish both communities and ecosystems. Our public lands have thrived under this stewardship and continually illustrate its benefits, from higher soil and water quality to sustainable timber management.

As they have done since our earliest days, natural places and wilderness play a key role in shaping our relationship to our communities and to God. These lands and their intrinsic beauty and value must be maintained and used wisely. Those portions set aside by past generations were not intended to be used for energy or mineral development in the future but rather to protect a part of the United States and the whole of Creation that, if destroyed, would be truly irreplaceable.

A Faithful Budget will:

- Provide land management agencies in the Departments of Interior and Agriculture with sufficient funding to ensure they exercise care in managing these spaces and protect treasured lands for future generations.
- Provide support for lands protected under the National Landscape Conservation System.
- Fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which has been critical in protecting local watersheds and recreation lands around the country.

D. Stand with Impacted and Marginalized Communities

Communities at home and around the world experience the devastating effects of climate change and environmental degradation. Our actions have disproportionate impacts on the health and quality of life for our brothers and sisters in low-income communities, urban and rural areas, Native American communities, and communities of color. While a staggering one in ten children in the U.S. currently lives with asthma, the rate is much higher in African-American communities, with 17 percent of African-American children -- a 50-percent increase over the past decade -- suffering from asthma.¹²⁰ Communities that live in low-income housing located next to Superfund sites -- areas contaminated by dangerous levels of toxic waste -- often become “cancer clusters,” or communities that face abnormally high rates of the chronic disease.¹²¹ Our budget must play an important role in funding policies that support healing and remediation for these disproportionately impacted communities.

Bearing Witness:

Residents at a San Mateo, CA low-income housing project near a Superfund site showed an “abnormal” number of genetic defects, according to a study conducted by the EPA. The housing project had been built on soil taken from a former gas plant that left toxic chemical residues in the ground. For years, the community experienced mysterious rashes and nosebleeds, abnormally high rates of infertility, and cases of memory loss and cancer.

Source: San Francisco Chronicle, “Gene Defects for Neighbors of Toxic Site.” June 19, 2000.

As the historically largest emitter of global warming pollution, our nation must assume responsibility for our actions and help those living in developing nations, with many of them living on less than \$1 per day, to prepare for and adapt to climate change-related impacts. Without commitment from the United States and others, climate-related disasters and impacts will increase environmental pressures, exacerbate hunger, and contribute to regional instability. To this end, a Faithful Budget will address global climate change as it affects God’s Creation and the people who live here, particularly those in the world’s most vulnerable nations.

A Faithful Budget will:

- Fund the EPA’s Environmental Justice program, which seeks to connect with those who have been historically underrepresented in environmental decision making to ensure all people enjoy the same protections from environmental and health hazards.
- Include adequate funding for international adaption and mitigation efforts that are related specifically to addressing global climate change in the world’s most vulnerable developing nations.

E. Invest in a Sustainable Energy Future

A Faithful Budget acknowledges the true social, economic, environmental, and public health cost of fossil fuels. Too many of our current methods used to extract and burn energy sacrifice the health and well-being of communities in exchange for profit. Practices such as mountaintop removal mining, hydraulic fracturing, and onshore and offshore oil drilling have had devastating impacts on the natural world and human communities. Studies have shown that increased birth defects,¹²² water contamination,¹²³ and poor safety standards¹²⁴ are just a few of the consequences of the extraction of oil, natural gas, and coal. Poor air and water quality are also consequences of our dependences upon these unsustainable sources of the bulk of our energy needs.

We must prioritize investments in renewable energy, including wind, solar, and tidal power, as well as reinvigorate support for energy efficiency programs to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels. In addition to investment in expanding the use of renewable, sustainable energy sources, we must also expand our research and development programs that will foster cutting-edge technology for future generations.

One critical step in reordering our national investments is to shift energy subsidies away from oil, coal, and other fossil fuel production toward renewable energy and energy efficiency. For too long, we have failed to acknowledge the true costs of fossil fuels. Government subsidies and tax loopholes merely prop up these artificially inexpensive energy sources while endangering the health and well-being of our communities and our environment. We can no longer afford to provide financial support to industries that pollute communities and families, permanently damage God's Creation, and are unwilling to change their business practices in the face of global climate change. Energy subsidies must go to industries that can produce energy with less impact on Creation and God's people.

A Faithful Budget will:

- End subsidies for the fossil fuel industry, including coal, oil (onshore and offshore), and natural gas.
- Provide energy subsidies, if any, for renewable energy research and development and energy efficiency technologies.
- Increase funding for research and development of new types of renewable energy and energy efficiency measures that can be distributed widely.

VII. A FAITHFUL BUDGET PAID FOR

A. Introduction

A Faithful Budget will address how investments in a shared future can be accomplished in a fiscally responsible way. We cannot leave our children a legacy of debt, but neither must we leave them a legacy of rising poverty and growing inequality. Throughout this document, we have identified our priorities for reasonable spending reductions to help fund vital programs. In particular, these reductions can be found in “Investing in Human Rights and True Human Security.” Additionally, we note that an emphasis on job creation and economic revitalization will generate new revenues and reduce families’ immediate need to rely on social safety net programs. Finally, we believe that resources can be found in a fair and just tax system.

B. Grounded in Just Taxation

This Faithful Budget reinstates a just tax system, including investment in the renewal of the nation’s economic well being and protection of the poor and vulnerable, which will itself serve to reduce the long-term deficit. Such investment should be financed through a tax system founded on fairness and shared commitment, where those who have reaped extraordinary benefits contribute proportionately to the good of all.

A Faithful Budget will call for a federal tax code that:

- Raises adequate revenues to meet societal needs while supporting a strong economy and job creation.
- Calls for shared responsibility among individuals and corporations to take care of our needs and priorities.
- Provides adequate income assistance and related services to working families and individuals.
- Strengthens and expands tax programs that support low-income working parents with children.
- Provides incentives to pursue and maintain employment and increase earnings.
- Strengthens and expands programs that support workers’ efforts to develop their human capital, invest in their financial security, and achieve self-sufficiency.
- Eliminates wasteful and inefficient tax loopholes and tax expenditures in the individual and corporate tax codes.
- Efficiently uses funding so as to promote intergenerational responsibility.
- Works simply and practicably so that taxpayers, tax administrators, and legislators can all understand the rules and confidently apply them or comply with them.

IX. CONCLUSION

In proposing these budget priorities, we are reminded of the Prophet Jeremiah, who nearly despaired when the political leaders would not act with righteousness. He cried out, “*If I say, ‘I will not mention [God], or speak any more in [God’s] name,’ then within me there is something like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot.*” We cannot hold it in, nor can we abandon our brothers and sisters at home and around the world as they suffer, trapped in the cycle of crushing poverty.

Throughout this document, we identify and seek to address the “need” deficit, coupling broad principles with hard statistics and specific calls to action. As the budget process looks toward Fiscal Year 2013, we hope that this framework can set a direction as well as make specific investments toward a better future.

In proposing these budget priorities, we are united across our diverse faith traditions and policy focuses. We have worked together to propose a budget that reflects our shared values as people of faith. We encourage our national leaders to similarly come together. ***Act with mercy and justice by serving the common good, robustly funding support for poor and vulnerable peoples, both at home and abroad, and exercising proper care and keeping of the earth.***

Let us embrace a call to live together in community, not agreeing on everything, but sharing in the common purpose of bettering our nation, protecting our brothers and sisters here in the U.S. and around the world, and sustainably caring for our environment. We call on Congress and the Administration to craft a federal budget that protects the common good, values each individual and his or her livelihood, and helps to lift the burden on the poor.

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