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ECUMENICAL ADVOCACY DAYS
FOR GLOBAL PEACE WITH JUSTICE

**Confronting Chaos, Forging Community
Challenging Racism, Materialism and Militarism**

**Congressional Lobby Day
April 24, 2017**

As people of faith, we call on Congress to make budget decisions that advance the common good. Rather than increasing Pentagon spending, we urge Congress to preserve robust funding for programs that help provide support to people living in poverty and other vulnerable persons in America and abroad, address systemic racism, and exercise responsible care for the earth.

Our Faith Calling

As Christians, our faith calls us to advocate for public policy that ensures the just allocation of resources for the common good of all. Our federal budget is a moral document: a reflection of the values and priorities we hold as a nation. As such, we are inspired by the vision in Isaiah (40:3) of a day when “*every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain.*” God calls us today to ensure the equitable and sustainable allocation of our resources toward a more just and peaceful world.

Fifty years ago, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. offered a prescription for the root causes of inequality and insecurity in his time. The “giant triplets” of racism, militarism, and materialism remain ever present today. *Racism* remains an open wound in our nation, resulting in the disproportionate killing of black and brown bodies and the stunting of lives through unjust economic and social structures. *Militarism* remains the United States’ overriding approach to foreign policy as reflected in our lopsided budget that allocates drastically more for defense than diplomacy or development. Extreme *materialism* threatens our souls and our very planet, as poverty increases while prosperity narratives and unrestrained capitalism spreads despite overwhelming evidence of its unsustainability. As in Dr. King’s time, we teeter precariously between *chaos* and *community*.

In 2017, we are drawn together at Ecumenical Advocacy Days to challenge racism, militarism, and materialism. We reflect God’s call to love our neighbor through our advocacy for a budget that advances the common good and builds toward the beloved *community* God intends.



We call on Congress to robustly fund human needs in the United States and abroad

Too many people in our country and around our globe work hard for a better life for their families, but are struggling to meet basic human needs. In the beloved community, we are all brothers and sisters sharing responsibility for each other, for all living things, and for the protection of our earth for generations to come.

- Congress should ensure that low-income families, and those unable to find work, have **assistance that makes it possible for parents to work, and to access good nutrition, quality healthcare and affordable housing.**
 - *Deep cuts to social programs will devastate American families and communities. For our society as a whole to flourish all of us must flourish. As St. Paul wrote, when one member of the body suffers, all suffer.*
 - *Members of our communities experiencing need for assistance consist mostly of children, the elderly, those whose health impedes them from full employment, or those working in jobs with unjustly low wages and little access to affordable child care. Recipients of food and housing assistance typically no longer require assistance after a few months of this hand up.*
- Congress must **increase our nation's commitment to Americans of color** by funding efforts to remedy unjust treatment in education, in employment, by the criminal justice system and in access to housing, economic opportunity, government services and a healthy environment. Police practices must be reformed and the militarization of police equipment eliminated, along with the use of privately-owned prisons and detention centers. Congress must give priority to programs that educate, support communities that welcome returning citizens, and provide vital treatment options rather than putting people in prison who have addiction problems. Congress must fully fund the Census to ensure an accurate formula for the distribution of safety net resources and to ensure that historically undercounted communities of color are able to be full participants in our democracy.
 - *Those with black and brown skin face prejudice, unconscious bias and mistreatment in personal encounters, and more broadly through systemic, structural barriers keeping them from equal treatment in law, education and business.*
 - *America must press ahead to become a land of liberty and justice for all, using our resources for the protection and flourishing of all persons whatever their skin tone or country of origin.*
- Congress must be responsive to the needs of our brothers and sisters across the globe by supporting robust **foreign assistance focused on food security, broad-based development, health and nutrition, environmental stewardship and the prevention of violent conflicts.**
 - *Using less than 1 percent of the federal budget, over the past 20 years U.S. aid has helped save millions of lives, cut extreme poverty in half, and reduce the number of hungry people. Rigorous evaluations – 1,425 since 2011 -- have ensured that aid is cost-effective and productive.*
 - *Providing aid now means that we won't have to spend more later on humanitarian crises and violent conflicts. According to a recent letter by 121 retired U.S. generals, "The State Department, USAID . . . and other development agencies are critical to preventing conflict and reducing the need to put our men and women in uniform in harm's way.*
- The United States must be an example for the nations by providing **robust assistance for refugees abroad and urge the President to restore resettlement in the U.S. to 110,000 at a minimum.**
 - *In the midst of the greatest refugee crisis in history, migration and refugee assistance helps ensure global human security and a stable world, which benefits the U.S. In addition, refugee resettlement in the U.S. fulfills the biblical imperative to "welcome the stranger" and expresses our nation's historic values.*
 - *The majority of refugees coming to the U.S. are children and women. All refugees coming to the U.S. are thoroughly vetted over vast two or more years.*



- Congress should **reject funding to implement President Trump’s executive orders on immigration, build a wall and more detention centers, and increase raids and deportations of our community members.** These and other anti-immigrant policies are unnecessary and not cost-effective.
 - *Spending priorities should support inclusiveness and building of community. Undocumented immigrants pay taxes and make positive contributions to our communities. While some politicians propagate the lie that immigrants commit crimes, the vast majority are law-abiding and embrace American values.*
 - *Funding for a wall and more deportation agents and detention centers is unnecessary, not cost-effective, and will harm our communities, environmental habitats and critical migration corridors for wildlife. Net undocumented immigration across our southern border has been zero for several years. We seek real solutions, like immigration reform, rather than doubling down on ineffective and inhumane enforcement efforts.*
- Congress should enable our responsibility to act as wise stewards of the earth and its environment. Congress should **take robust measures to address climate change, fully fund our government’s ability to safeguard clean air and water, and reduce industrial pollution that contaminates the environment and harms human health.**
 - *Human health and wellbeing depend on the responsible “care and keeping of the earth,” as Scripture tells us.*
 - *The drive for excessive profits has led to the polluting of the environment and the altering the earth’s natural rhythms, threatening the wellbeing of humanity. As responsible stewards, we must protect our children’s future.*

We call on Congress to reject increases in Pentagon spending, especially at the expense of human needs.

Increasing Pentagon spending at the expense of domestic and international investments in human wellbeing and the common good is cruel and short-sighted. As Jesus admonished, we must “seek the things that make for peace.” We find true security only when everyone’s security is assured and everyone’s basic needs are met, in our country and around the world.

President Trump has proposed a 10 percent increase (\$54 billion) in defense spending for the fiscal 2018 budget. Other members of Congress have proposed an additional \$40 billion above this amount. These proposals would increase Pentagon spending well above \$600 billion, and does not include almost \$60 billion off-budget funds designated for war-related expenses. Such an increase would be paid for with cuts of over \$50 billion in domestic spending and foreign aid.

- **Increasing Pentagon spending is harmful, wasteful and unnecessary.**
 - *It is unjust to increase Pentagon spending on the backs of people who are vulnerable and struggling with poverty. As President Dwight D. Eisenhower said, “Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed.”*
 - *The U.S. spends more on defense than the next eight countries combined. The U.S. spends more than four times what China spends on the military and more than ten times what Russia spends.*
 - *The Pentagon must be thoroughly audited. Prioritizing mission and eliminating waste must take priority over unwise and unaffordable increases. The Washington Post recently shed light on a report of \$125 billion in waste buried by the Pentagon. In a June 2016 report the Defense Department’s Inspector General said that the Army’s financial statements were “materially misstated” by billions of dollars, and that “DoD and Army managers could not rely on the data in their accounting systems when making management and resource decisions.”*
 - *More Pentagon spending won’t help our economy. It is less effective in producing jobs than comparable investments in education, health care, or clean energy.*



- *Growing our nuclear arsenal is unnecessary and dangerous. If the U.S. builds more, other countries will follow, inciting a new nuclear arms race. A safer world – and perhaps humanity’s future -- requires that we work with other nations to reduce such weapons.*

- **Congress can enhance true U.S. and human security by maintaining or increasing robust funding for diplomacy, human development, strengthening democratic institutions and strategic conflict resolution and peace-building.**
 - *Our safety and wellbeing – and that of vulnerable peoples worldwide – depends on rethinking security. Overwhelming evidence shows that wars and a reliance on militarism have bought greater human insecurity. Instead, investment in sustainable wellbeing, peace-building and systems that move toward greater equality and justice are shown again and again to create stability and security.*
 - *Humanitarian and poverty-focused aid saves lives, brings hope, provides strong return on investment to the U.S. taxpayer, and creates a more secure world for everyone.*
 - *Programs supporting community-based violence prevention, conflict resolution and peace-building strategies are the most humane and effective way to prevent violent conflict and heal after violence.*
 - *Supporting human rights, the rule of law, judicial independence and democratic institutions increase people’s wellbeing and help communities to flourish.*

As in Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s time, we face the giant triplets of racism, militarism and extreme materialism. Our nation must respond with a greater commitment to the common good, including to impoverished and marginalized people at home and abroad. We must be wise in the pursuit of true human security rather than making unnecessary and unwise increases in Pentagon spending. We urge Congress to enact a budget that ensures the wellbeing and true human security of all Americans and all people.