



March 21, 2007

United States Senate
Washington, DC

Dear Senator:

As members of the Emergency Campaign for America's Priorities (ECAP), we are writing in support of passage of the Senate 2008 budget as approved by the Senate Budget Committee. It represents a fundamental shift in priorities from the unfair budgets of the past six years and is an important step towards the "First Things First" agenda supported by ECAP.

Most significantly, the resolution developed by the Budget Committee reverses years of budgets that gave a free pass to budget-busting tax cuts. It restores a requirement that new tax breaks, as well as new mandatory spending, be paid for, and would prohibit the use of fast-track reconciliation procedures to enact legislation that would add to the deficit. The resolution prioritizes closing tax loopholes, ending tax shelters, and collecting taxes that are already due – steps that will help restore fairness to the tax system and provide the revenues needed to address pressing human needs. The resolution does not preclude Congress from enacting new tax cuts or extending expiring tax cuts, but does require that it find a way to make up for the lost revenue or find 60 votes in the Senate to waive the requirement. *It is critical that the Senate reject amendments to the budget resolution that would weaken the pay-as-you-go rule or exempt some or all of the tax cuts enacted since 2001 from its application.*

The budget rejects the cuts to vital services proposed in President Bush's budget, and provides for some much-needed increases in investments in our families and communities. For example, the Senate 2008 budget authorizes up to \$50 billion in new spending over five years for the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), to be paid for by new revenues or savings. In contrast, the President's budget provides only \$2 billion in new federal funding for SCHIP, an amount insufficient to protect coverage for those currently enrolled, much less to expand coverage for uninsured children. The Senate budget allows for up to \$5 billion in new child care funding, paid for by new revenues or savings; in contrast, the President's budget does not provide an increase and assumes that almost half a million children will lose their child care by 2010. The Senate Budget also provides a tool that would help to establish an affordable housing fund and assumes a modest but desperately needed increase in the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). The Senate budget also allows up to \$15 billion over five years in new spending for the reauthorization of the farm bill, paid for by new revenues or savings.

This increased funding should enable the Food Stamp program to better serve hungry Americans. *We urge the Senate to preserve the funding in the budget for these priorities.*

The additional funding provided in this budget for domestic discretionary programs – just \$7.3 billion, once inflation is taken into account—is extremely modest. While it is a significant improvement over the President’s budget, it fails to provide sufficient funding to meet the pressing human needs that have been mounting for the past six years. *We urge the Senate to reject amendments to reduce the level of funding for domestic discretionary programs, at a minimum, and to make additional funding available to restore critical services as the budget process moves forward.*

The budget resolution approved by the Senate Budget Committee begins the process of restoring America’s priorities. We urge you to support that process by opposing amendments both that cut or restrict domestic services or allow tax breaks that are not paid for. We believe that if the forward steps of the Budget Committee’s resolution remain intact or are strengthened, the budget resolution deserves your support. We look forward to working with you to build on this progress in putting “First Things First.”

Sincerely,

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)
ACORN

American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)

American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)

American Academy of HIV Medicine

Coalition on Human Needs

Food Research and Action Center (FRAC)

Legal Momentum

Migrant Legal Action Program

National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd

National Community Action Foundation

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force

National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC)

National Women’s Law Center (NWLC)

National Priorities Project

NETWORK: A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby

OMB Watch

People For the American Way (PFAW)

RESULTS

Service Employees International Union (SEIU)

United for a Fair Economy

United States Student Association (USSA)

USAction

Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW)

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