

March 30, 2009

Dear Senator:

The undersigned organizations support a budget that makes the investments we need to rebuild our economy and promote shared prosperity. We know that putting our country on the right path requires responsible choices, including ensuring that there is enough revenue to sustain our recovery and invest in the future.

When the Senate begins consideration of the budget resolution, we expect that amendments will be offered to substantially reduce revenues and worsen long-term deficits by reducing the estate tax beyond its already low 2009 levels. A further reduction in the estate tax could deprive the nation of hundreds of billions of dollars in the coming years, funds needed for long-overdue investments in health care, education, clean energy, and other public services. We urge you to vote against such amendments, as a matter both of fiscal responsibility and proper focus on meeting our most urgent needs.

The proposed budget resolution retains the cuts already made to the estate tax for 2009, exempting estates up to \$3.5 million for an individual, or \$7 million for a couple. At this level, the estates of over 99.7 percent of Americans will not owe any estate tax. And, only a miniscule number of small businesses and farm estates will owe any tax – just 140 in the entire country annually, according to a CBO study – and all but a handful would have sufficient other assets to pay the tax without touching the farm or business. Leaving the estate tax at the level in the budget resolution will already cost \$72 billion over five years and \$256 billion over ten years, according to the latest estimate from the Congressional Budget Office.

With the nation in a deep recession and millions of Americans struggling with the loss of their jobs and their savings, facing long-term challenges and recognizing the need to put the budget on a sustainable path, it is incomprehensible that Congress would make it a priority to further reduce the estate tax. The right priorities are clear: helping the vast majority of Americans share in economic growth through health care reform, education, renewable energy, and providing help to struggling families. Even now, some are suggesting we cannot afford to make these investments. An even deeper cut in the estate tax would be an irresponsible choice that we and our children will have to pay for. Even if the budget were to declare that any further reduction in the estate tax had to be offset, it would be a statement that new revenues or savings should be devoted to cutting taxes for a tiny fraction of the wealthiest estates, rather than for other critical investments or deficit reduction.

We are counting on you to support a budget that meets the needs of families and makes long-term investments in our nation's future, and puts the nation on a fiscally responsible path by restoring fairness to our tax system – not cutting services for those in need.

We urge you to vote against any amendment to further reduce revenue from the estate tax.

Sincerely,

ACORN
AFL-CIO
Alliance for Healthy Homes
Alliance for Justice
American Federation of Teachers
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees
Americans for Democratic Action

Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs
Campaign for America's Future
Campaign for College Affordability
Campus Progress Action Fund
Catholics in Alliance
Center for Community Change
Child Welfare League of America
Children's Defense Fund
Citizens for Tax Justice
CLASP
Coalition on Human Needs
Communications Workers of America
Community Action Partnership
Families USA
Family Promise
Food Research & Action Center (FRAC)
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Leadership Conference of Women Religious
Leadership Conference on Civil Rights
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Coalition for the Homeless
National Council on Aging
National Disability Rights Network
National Education Association
National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Action Fund
National Low Income Housing Coalition
National Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Association
National Policy and Advocacy Council on Homelessness (NPACH)
National Priorities Project
National Women's Health Network
National Women's Law Center
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
OMB Watch
People For the American Way
PolicyLink
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Washington Office
ProgressNow
Public Citizen
RESULTS
SEIU
The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Action Fund
The Wilderness Society
Union for Reform Judaism
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
United for a Fair Economy
USAction
Voices for America's Children
Wealth for the Common Good
Wider Opportunities for Women
Working America
YWCA USA