



# TAKE ACTION!!

February 3, 2009

## Call Your Senator: Urge Support for Economic Stimulus Measures that Reflect a Priority for Poor and Vulnerable People

### TAKE ACTION NOW!

The Senate of the United States will consider its version of the economic stimulus package entitled *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009* this week. Call your senators and urge them to support:

- **capitalizing the new Housing Trust Fund**, which will employ workers in the construction or rehabilitation of homes for extremely low income families. Likewise, additional funding for **additional housing vouchers** would offer access to stable, affordable housing for vulnerable families and allow these families to spend their limited resources on other needs, thereby contributing to the economic recovery.
- **the refundable child tax credit** provisions in the House bill over the Senate provisions. The House bill expands the tax credit to millions more poor and working families by removing a minimum earning criterion. However, the Senate provisions retain the wage floor. For example, a family with two children earning \$14,500 a year (full-time, minimum-wage) would qualify for the full credit of \$2,000 (\$1,000 per child), because the credit would begin to phase in with the first dollar of earnings. In the Senate version, that same family would qualify for a credit of only \$1,275.
- **increased funding and expanded eligibility for (1) SNAP benefits** (formerly food stamps); (2) **The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)**; and (3) **Women, Infants and Children – WIC reserve funding**. These food distribution programs respond to urgent needs and help stimulate the economy by freeing up family resources for other urgent spending.
  - In particular, urge a **YES vote on the Bonus TEFAP amendment** (S. 194), being offered by Senator Casey (D-PA)--with support by Senators Snowe (R-ME) and Voinovich (R-OH)--that will assist states and food assistance agencies to offset the costs of storing, transporting, and distributing bonus TEFAP commodities. This amendment will encourage and make it possible for more people in need to receive food assistance, particularly in difficult to reach areas.
- **a strong safety net** by including adequate funding for social service and health care programs that will allow state and local governments to meet their communities' needs and maintain jobs in these critical sectors.

### WHY IS THIS ACTION IMPORTANT NOW?

The Senate will consider the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009* this week. It is important for the Senate to include measures that reflect a priority for poor and vulnerable people. As Bishop William Murphy of Rockville Centre, Chairman of the USCCB Committee on Domestic Justice and Human

Development, said in his letter to Members of Congress: “Low-income families and individuals are experiencing the greatest hardship and have the least capacity to cope in this time of economic crisis. Low income people are also likely to use these new resources quickly to purchase the essentials of life and to help move our economy forward.... Attention to those most affected by the crisis with priority for the poor and vulnerable can restore economic growth by rebuilding hope and opportunity for those who are losing their jobs, their homes, and their chance at a decent life for their families.”

## WHAT DOES THIS ISSUE HAVE TO DO WITH MY FAITH?

Catholic teaching reminds us that “a fundamental measure of any economy is how the poor and vulnerable are faring” (U.S. Bishops, 1996). As our nation responds to the economic crisis, those who are poor and are least able to cope must be at the center of our policymaking. Catholics are called to bring this message to our elected officials. In his first encyclical letter, Pope Benedict XVI has taught that “the building of a better world requires Christians to speak with a united voice in working to inculcate ‘respect for the rights and needs of everyone, especially the poor, the lowly and the defenceless’” (No. 29).

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

Contact your Senators now. Urge a priority for poor and vulnerable people in the economic recovery bill and ask them to support the specific policies listed above. Call the Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121 or find your Senators’ contact information at [www.congress.org](http://www.congress.org).

## FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

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