

URGE YOUR SENATORS NOT TO SUPPORT THE BUDGET RECONCILIATION SPENDING REDUCTION CONFERENCE REPORT

ByCarolynn Race

[December 19] Early this morning, the House voted 212-206 to approve a nearly \$40 billion conference report for spending reductions to mandatory programs over five years. To see how your Representative voted, go to <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2005/roll670.xml>.

The agreement now stands or falls on the final vote in the Senate. The Senate may vote on the conference report (S 1932) as early as today. Call your Senators toll-free at 202-224-3121 and **URGE THEM NOT TO SUPPORT THE BUDGET RECONCILIATION SPENDING REDUCTION CONFERENCE REPORT.**

Although early reports suggested that the agreement left out most cuts hurting low-income people initially proposed by the House, that is NOT the case. Many harmful cuts in Medicaid, child support, foster care, SSI, TANF, and student loans remain in the agreement. No food stamp cuts were included in the conference report. The conference report also includes changes to the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program, with stringent new work requirements that the Congressional Budget Office estimates may cost state governments \$8.4 billion over the next five years to finance welfare-to-work programs to meet the new requirements. The conference report includes \$1 billion in additional child care funding over five years, which, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities notes is "\$7.4 billion less than CBO estimates to be the cost to states of meeting the new work requirements, and more than \$11 billion less than what states will need both to meet the new work requirements and to ensure that their current child care programs for low-income working families not on TANF do not have to be scaled back as a result of the impact of inflation on child care costs."

A copy of the conference report is available at http://www.rules.house.gov/109/text/s1932cr/109s1932_text.pdf.

Call and e-mail your Senators. To find their contact information, go to <http://capwiz.com/pcusa/dbq/officials/> or call the Capitol switchboard directly at (202) 224-3121. Ask your Senators not to reduce funding for vital programs that serve the most vulnerable among us. Remind them that cuts to vital human needs programs are not acceptable. Call on them to insist on a government that follows the ethical values of justice for the poor, welfare for children, hospitality to the stranger, and assistance to the disadvantaged.

General Assembly Policy:

The 207th General Assembly (1995) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) called on Congress "to defeat any proposals that base budget or deficit reductions primarily on the services provided to children, families, the needy, and the homeless" and urged strengthening of federal commitments to these groups. The Assembly also called on Congress "to insist on a government that follows ethical values of justice for the poor, welfare for children, hospitality to the stranger, and assistance to the disadvantaged." (Minutes, p. 718)

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Dear Senator:

As a Presbyterian, I am writing to urge you to vote against the budget reconciliation conference report, S 1932. The conference report includes reductions to programs that serve people in need. Particularly in light of the devastation of hurricanes Katrina and Rita and new data showing that poverty and hunger are on the rise, reducing funding to vital human needs services - including Medicaid, SSI, student loans, and child support enforcement - is unacceptable. I am also concerned that the conference report incorporates the reauthorization of the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families - increasing the work requirements for TANF recipients without adequate funding for child care to meet the needs of working parents.

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Our concern is rooted in our Biblical tradition. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus was asked, "'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink?' ...And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'"

Thank you.