



Redirect \$29 billion from excessive Pentagon spending to human needs

March 10, 2008

Dear Senator/Representative:

We are national and regional groups, writing to you regarding the discretionary portion of the FY09 budget resolution and the appropriations subcommittee allocations. We urge you to adequately fund human needs. Please redirect excessive Pentagon spending to help meet domestic discretionary needs.

Higher Pentagon spending does not guarantee greater security. True security for individuals and families requires support for adequate housing, access to nutritious foods, available healthcare, safe child care, and appropriate education to ensure a well-prepared workforce. Cutting funds for vital programs in these and other areas causes real, immediate harm to persons who struggle to meet their economic needs. This is a major source of insecurity!

The President's FY09 budget request calls for spending \$541 billion on the Pentagon, a 7.5% increase over the FY08 request of \$502 billion. That is an increase of \$29 billion beyond an inflationary increase. It is also 54% of the discretionary budget, and it does not include the additional costs of combat operations in Iraq.

The multiple stresses of funding due to

- the war in Iraq,
- the economic downturn,
- reduction of states' tax revenue while reducing federal portions of funding for mandated programs, and
- continued gifts to the wealthiest households in the nation, through tax breaks

directly affect the ability of families to meet their day-to-day needs by eliminating or reducing the resources for necessary assistance.

While the President requested a 7.5% increase in funding for the Pentagon, his 0.3% increase for domestic discretionary spending falls far short of the estimated 2.8% rate of inflation. Therefore, overall the programs intended to bring security to families are cut approximately 2.5%, not accounting for inflation. Again, President Bush has called for elimination of programs, 151 this year and many for the seventh time. These cuts and eliminations are an outrage.

As in past years, the proposed cuts take aim at children, the "elderly poor" and others who lack economic power. A few of the programs which are especially targeted by the Bush proposal follow.

- The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) which provides heating and cooling assistance for low-income families and the elderly, who are least able to manage escalating energy costs. A 20% reduction was proposed, even though only 15.7% of eligible households were served in 2007 due to limited funding.
- Child Care assistance allows some security to mothers of young children who seek quality child care as they work. The 12% reduction, with flat-funding for FY '09, results in 200,000 children in low-income families losing access to any assistance.
- Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program cuts would eliminate 100,000 vouchers for low-income households. The fund for repairs and maintenance of public housing would be cut 20%, as would Community Development Block Grants which improve housing, the living environment and economic opportunities principally for persons with low and moderate incomes.
- Housing for the Elderly (Section 202) and Section 811 Housing for Persons with Disabilities would be cut 35% to 40% by the President.

- The Urban Indian Health Program currently meets only 22% of the need for primary care services. The President would freeze this, causing at least a 2.8% decrease in services.
- Education programs targeted to meet the needs of Native American children would be eliminated. Help to public schools on tribal and federal lands, which receive less tax revenue, would be flat-funded – again an indirect cut.
- The Housing Improvement Program at the Bureau of Indian Affairs would be eliminated, and energy department funding for Indian nations would fall from \$6 million to \$1 million.

Many of the costs of recession fall most heavily on those who are least able to carry the burden. Food, energy, transportation and housing costs rise just as much in low-income areas as for the wealthy. They just demand a higher percentage of their resources.

The FY'09 budget must prelude the difficult work ahead to bring this nation back to a point of moral balance. As a Member of Congress, your responsibility to provide for the common good (or the "general welfare" described in the Preamble to the Constitution) is tremendous. We call on you to reverse the trend of the last several years. It is critical in this year to ensure that those who have the greatest resources contribute to meet the basic survival needs of those at risk on our nation. Do not, in any way, establish even more gifts to the wealthiest in our society through further cuts in their household or corporate taxes.

We strongly urge that you redirect the excessive Pentagon spending the President requests to domestic human needs. It is essential that you create a budget that protects and supports healthy communities at home. Show the people of this nation that you are up to this tremendous task!

Sincerely,

National groups

NETWORK: A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
Women's Action for New Directions

American Friends Service Committee
Americans for Democratic Action, Inc.
Americans for Democratic Action
Carmelites Sisters, Vedruna
Church Women United
Community Action Partnership
Dominican Sisters of Hope
Feminist Majority
Foreign Policy In Focus
Franciscan Action Network
Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls, Minnesota
Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Gray Panthers
Institute of Social Medicine and Community Health
Leadership Conference of Women Religious
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Association for State Community Services Programs
National Council of Churches
National Council of Women's Organizations
National Immigrant Solidarity Network
National Organization for Women
National Priorities Project
Peace Action
Physicians for Social Responsibility
Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ, Provincial Leadership Team of the American Province
Presbyterian Church (USA) Washington Office
Promise the Children (Unitarian Universalist)
Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Congregational Leadership

Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill
 Sisters of Divine Providence of Allison Park, PA
 Sisters of the Holy Cross Congregation Justice Committee
 Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, U.S.-Ontario Province Leadership Team
 Sisters of the Humility of Mary
 Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Leadership Team
 Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi
 Sisters of St. Francis
 Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God
 Sisters of the Presentation
 3D Security Initiative
 True Majority
 United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
 United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
 Wider Opportunities for Women
 Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, U.S. Section

Regional groups

HIV/AIDS Services for African Americans in Alaska/Anchorage, **Alaska**
 Arizona Advocacy Network/Phoenix, **Arizona**
 Protecting Arizona's Family Coalition/ Phoenix, AZ
 Affordable Housing Services/Pasadena, **California**
 Child Care Food Program Roundtable/Shingle Springs, CA
 Mount St Joseph-St Elizabeth/ San Francisco, CA
 Tri-Valley CAREs/Livermore, CA
 Collaborative Center for Justice, Inc./Hartford, **Connecticut**
 Jewish Family Services/Danbury, CT
 National Council of Jewish Women, CT
 Florida CHAIN (consumer health care advocacy network)/Hollywood, **Florida**
 Florida Consumer Action Network/Tampa, FL
 Pax Christi Northeast Florida/ St. Augustine, FL
 Action for a Clean Environment/Alto, **Georgia**
 Georgia Rural Urban Summit/Decatur, GA
 Spirit Of Oneness, Inc./Dunwoody, GA
 Ursuline Sisters of the Roman Union, Western Province/Moscow, **Idaho**
 Illinois/Iowa Center for Independent Living/Rock Island, **Illinois**
 Peace Coalition of Southern Illinois/Fellowship of Reconciliation/Carbondale, IL
 Pediatric AIDS Chicago Prevention Initiative/Chicago, IL
 Project IRENE/Berwyn, IL
 YWCA Quincy/Quincy, IL
 Anchor House, Inc./Seymour, **Indiana**
 Fellowship of Reconciliation, Driftless Area affiliate/Decorah, **Iowa**
 Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia, **Kansas**
 Aspirations/Baton Rouge, **Louisiana**
 Maine Association of Interdependent Neighborhoods/**Maine**
 Maine People's Alliance/South Portland, ME
 Partners in Ending Hunger/Portland, ME
 Advocacy and Training Center/Cumberland, **Maryland**
 Benedictine Sisters of Baltimore Emmanuel Monastery, MD
 Public Justice Center/Baltimore, MD
 United Ministries, Inc./ Baltimore, MD
 Church of St. Andrew Outreach Program Community Aid Committee/Marblehead, **Massachusetts**
 Adrian Dominican Sisters Office of Global Mission, Justice and Peace/Adrian, **Michigan**
 Catholic Caucus Southeast Michigan/Rochester Hills, MI
 Congregation of St. Joseph Justice Team/Madison Heights, MI
 Sisters, Home Visitors of Mary/Detroit, MI
 Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Leadership Council of the Sisters/Monroe, MI
 Sisters of Mercy Detroit Leadership Team/Farmington Hills, MI
 Hunger Solutions Minnesota/St. Paul, **Minnesota**
 Mount Saint Benedict Monastery/Crookston, MN

Pax Christi Northwest Minnesota/Crookston, MN
 School Sisters of Notre Dame Office of Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation/Mankato, MN
 School Sisters of Notre Dame Provincial Council/Mankato, MN
 Sisters of St. Francis/Rochester, MN
 Institute for Peace & Justice/St. Louis, **Missouri**
 Missouri Budget Project/St. Louis, MO
 Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet and Associates, St. Louis Province/St. Louis, MO
 Sisters of the Most Precious Blood Leadership Team/O'Fallon, MO
 Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada/Reno, **Nevada**
 Urban League of Hudson County/Jersey City, **New Jersey**
 YWCA of Bergen County/NJ
 Another Chance And More Foundation INC (homeless shelter)/Pomona, **New York**
 Early Childhood Education Quality Council/Rochester, NY
 Greater New York Labor-Religion Coalition/New York, NY
 NY Universal Living Wage Warriors/Medford, NY
 Sisters of Charity of New York Office of Peace and Justice/Bronx, NY
 Women's City Club of New York/New York, NY
 Economic Council Helping Others/Farmington, **New Mexico**
 Minot Area Homeless Coalition, Inc/Minot, **North Dakota**
 Center for Community Solutions/Cleveland, **Ohio**
 Neighborhood Family Practice and We Are the Uninsured/Cleveland, OH
 Sisters of Mercy, Regional Community of Cincinnati, OH
 Sisters of the Precious Blood Leadership Team/Dayton, OH
 Sisters of St. Francis of Tiffin, OH - Leadership Team
 Oklahoma Therapeutic Foster Care Association/Oklahoma City, **Oklahoma**
 Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Portland Branch/**Oregon**
 Campaign for Working Families/Philadelphia, **Pennsylvania**
 Erie Benedictines for Peace/Erie, PA
 Mental Health Association of Southeastern Pennsylvania/Philadelphia, PA
 National Organization of Benedictines For Peace, Pittsburgh chapter
 Philadelphia Jewish Labor Committee
 Providence Connections, Inc./Pittsburgh, PA
 Sisters of Mercy--New York, Pennsylvania, Pacific West Community/Pittsburgh, PA
 Sisters of St. Joseph NW PA/Erie, PA
 Trinity Soup Kitchen/Bethlehem, PA
 Women's International League for Peace and Freedom/Pittsburgh Branch
 South Carolina Campaign to End AIDS/Columbia, **South Carolina**
 Black Children's Institute of Tennessee/Nashville, **Tennessee**
 Coalition of Working People and the Poor/Houston, **Texas**
 Family Life Center at St. Mary's University/San Antonio, TX
 Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament/Corpus Christi, TX
 United Methodist Texas Conference Board of Church & Society
 Coalition of Religious Communities/Salt Lake City, **Utah**
 Westgate Housing, Inc./Brattleboro, **Vermont**
 National Capital Presbytery Hunger Team/Northern **Virginia**, DC and 3 MD counties
 Catholic Community Services/AHA-Village Spirit Center for Community Change & Healing/Seattle,
Washington
 Minority Executive Directors Coalition/Seattle, WA
 Carthage College Social Work Club/Kenosha, **Wisconsin**
 Dominican Justice and Rights Commission Coordinating Council/Racine, WI
 St. Bede Monastery/Eau Claire, WI

*Letter organized by NETWORK: A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
 and Women's Action for New Directions*