

An unusually hopeful opportunity *for taking action on what we believe*

Normally, not much happens in Congress between election and inauguration. This winter, the one thing that has to happen is passage of the '09 federal budget. Even more than usual, it is a measure in great need of engaged citizenship and caring action. Here's why:

There is a rare opening in the 2009 budget for Congress to greatly help poor people in other countries. Efforts by citizens like us succeeded in putting a huge, \$5 billion increase in poverty-related development aid in the FY 2009 budget resolution, the biggest increase in years! Equally exciting: we won the spring Budget Resolution vote in the Senate by a 72 to 23 margin, so we can do this!



Contacting an elected official: Many people don't write or e-mail their elected officials because they find it intimidating, or wonder if it makes any difference. Yet, if we don't do so, our point of view will be undercounted.

The solution: A simple 4-6 sentence note, written in 8 to 12 minutes. Begin by asking yourself what approach might be helpful to your particular member of Congress (e.g. a 'thank you' for past leadership).

Center your note on what you want your official to do. Add several sentences with your reasons and perhaps a statistic. State clearly what you want and ask for a response. If you get inspired and write more, fine, but a modest amount of effort will do the job (*two examples of notes to elected officials, over*).

Examples of notes to elected officials.

Dear Senator Smith,

Members of our church are discussing the economy and ways government might help. I trust you see the importance of not waiting for a new administration on this.

I would like to see you work to strengthen financial accountability and to ensure that relief plans extend to ordinary people's problems with their mortgages, health care, jobs, retirement and college savings, etc.

People in other countries are hurting too. Please work to retain the \$5 billion in the Intn'l Affairs budget for programs addressing hunger and extreme poverty and to pass the Global Poverty Act (S. 2433) to better coordinate those programs.

I look forward to hearing about your efforts in these areas.

Sincerely yours,
John Q. Citizen

Dear Representative Jones,

The continuing Iraq War and Middle East conflict remind us that military options have grave limits in solving conflicts. Thus, I was dismayed to see the Administration and Congress considering an '09 budget with tens of billions in new funding for the military, with less talk about new money for the International Affairs programs that address extreme poverty and hunger in the world, key underlying causes of conflict.

I hope that you will work to contain military spending and expand programs that reduce violence in the world. Specifically, pass the FY'09 budget with the \$5 billion increase in poverty-related foreign aid agreed to last spring in the budget resolution. Also, pass the Global Poverty Act (S. 2433). Thanks for listening; I'd appreciate a reply regarding what you're doing on these concerns.

Your constituent,
Mary Q. Public

Make the most of your letter: Send it to all your members of Congress. And send it to a local newspaper, too! Newspapers publish letters in part by how many they receive on a given issue. Even if your letter isn't chosen it can help another on the same topic get printed – encouraging readers to learn more and take action. We'd also be pleased to see a copy: lpf@ecunet.org or LPF, 1710 11th Ave., Seattle, WA 98122. For further information: www.lutheranpeace.org ♦ www.lutheranpeace.blogspot.com ♦ www.lpfyouth.blogspot.com