



PRIORITIES FOR A FAITHFUL BUDGET FISCAL YEAR 2018

For Immediate Release: September 13, 2017

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Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Faith Leaders Call on Congress to Pass a Faithful Budget

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today representatives from 35 national, faith-based organizations are on Capitol Hill to urge Congress to support a “Faithful Budget,” which prioritizes the needs of people in poverty and pursuit of the common good over increased Pentagon spending and tax breaks for the wealthiest individuals and corporations.

“Government of, by, and for the people is a vital forum for promoting the common good, cultivating basic virtues, and ensuring that no one is left behind,” the Preamble to the Faithful Budget states. “A federal budget that is faithful to these convictions must promote a compassionate and comprehensive vision for the future. **As communities of faith, we call on our elected leaders to craft a Faithful Budget that fulfills our shared duty to each other in all segments of society.**”

The 70-page blueprint for faith values in federal budget and appropriations negotiations was written by faith leaders engaged in advocacy for immigration and refugees, native communities, healthcare, domestic human needs, Pentagon spending, criminal justice policy, international aid, tax, and environmental justice policy. The Jewish, Muslim, and Christian groups are connected in the Washington Interreligious Staff Community, which comes together to advocate for these critical issues and more.

“Our message to our national leaders—rooted in our sacred texts—is this: **Act with mercy and justice by serving the common good; robustly funding support for poor and vulnerable people as well as peacebuilding, both at home and abroad; and exercising proper care and keeping of the earth.** In the current political and economic climate, neither party is giving sufficient voice to the needs of the families who are struggling to overcome poverty.”

In response to the release of the Faithful Budget, **Sister Simone Campbell, SSS, Executive Director of NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice and co-chair of the Washington Interreligious Staff Community** said, “We know that our federal budget is a moral document because it articulates what our nation values and prioritizes. This budget can be summarized as: reasonable revenue for responsible programs.”

Rabbi Jonah Dov Pesner, Director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism and Senior Vice President of the Union for Reform Judaism said, “Where the proposed House and White House budgets fall short, the Faithful Budget offers a moral alternative. As Jews, we are called to embrace the orphan, the widow, and the stranger, and love our neighbors as ourselves. The budget priorities of the federal government must focus on lifting people up and protecting the most vulnerable members of society.”

Sharif Aly, interim CEO of Islamic Relief USA, said, “A faithful budget is not one that cuts essential services that millions of people rely on to help provide basic needs... A faithful budget is committed to

all of God's children, provides opportunities, and promotes a just society. These are all qualities Islamic Relief USA supports. We urge all members of Congress to follow suit."

The [entire Faithful Budget can be viewed online](#), along with [quotes from 18 faith leaders](#) involved in the crafting of the Faithful Budget:

- Sharif Aly, interim CEO, **Islamic Relief USA**
- David Bernstein, President and CEO, **Jewish Council for Public Affairs (JCPA)**
- Sr. Simone Campbell, SSS, Executive Director, **NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice**
- Patrick Carolan, Executive Director, **Franciscan Action Network**
- Rev. Jason Carson Wilson, Justice & Peace Policy Fellow, **United Church of Christ, Justice & Witness Ministries**
- Sister Patricia Chappell, SNDdeN, Executive Director, **Pax Christi USA**
- Colin Christopher, Director, Office for Interfaith and Community Alliances, **Islamic Society of North America**
- Larry Couch, Director, **National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd**
- Rev. Dr. Susan Henry-Crowe, General Secretary, **General Board of Church and Society of The United Methodist Church**
- Rev. Reggie Jackson, Director, **Office of Social Justice: Christian Reformed Church**
- Rev. John L. McCullough, President and CEO, **Church World Service**
- Sr. Patricia McDermott, RSM, President, Institute Leadership Team, **Sisters of Mercy of the Americas**
- Rabbi Jonah Dov Pesner, Director, **Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism** and Senior Vice President, **Union for Reform Judaism**
- Diane Randall, Executive Secretary, **Friends Committee on National Legislation**
- Shantha Ready Alonso, Executive Director, **Creation Justice Ministries**
- Sandy Sorensen, Director, Washington Office, **United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries**
- Sr. Joan Marie Steadman, CSC, Executive Director, **Leadership Conference of Women Religious**
- Jim Winkler, President, **National Council of Churches**

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The Washington Interreligious Staff Community (WISC) is a coalition of faith-based organizations and advocacy offices in Washington, D.C., which work together for a more just, peaceful, and ecologically sustainable world. For more information or to schedule an interview, contact Ashley Wilson, Communications Manager for NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice at awilson@networklobby.org.



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Quotes from Faith Leaders on the Faithful Budget

Sharif Aly, interim CEO of Islamic Relief USA:

“A faithful budget is one that is committed to all the people who live in this country and even those who live beyond it, since compassion has no borders. It’s not just a document containing dollars and cents. It’s a reflection of our shared morals, values, and priorities across different faith communities.

“Islamic Relief USA's mission has always been to help vulnerable and underprivileged populations in the United States and throughout the world. Our goals include reducing poverty, ending hunger by 2030 and providing other essential services, such as health care and education, that help individuals achieve self-sufficiency and security.

“A faithful budget is not one that cuts essential services that millions of people rely on to help provide basic needs. It does not merely provide handouts. Rather, it provides lift-ups to help them realize their American Dream.

“A faithful budget is committed to all of God’s children, provides opportunities, and promotes a just society. These are all qualities Islamic Relief USA supports. We urge all members of Congress to follow suit.”

David Bernstein, President and CEO, Jewish Council for Public Affairs (JCPA):

“Judaism teaches us to embrace our responsibility to protect the most vulnerable among us. Our Jewish values guide us to work with lawmakers to pass a budget that upholds this core value by strengthening assistance programs that prevent millions of Americans from falling behind. It is critical that Congress maintain adequate funding for anti-poverty programs, humanitarian aid and foreign assistance, environmental protection, and refugee resettlement. The choices could not be more consequential, and we are counting on Congress to pass a budget that provides equal opportunity to all and uplifts of our nation’s most vulnerable.”

Sr. Simone Campbell, SSS, Executive Director of NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice:

“We know that our federal budget is a moral document because it articulates what our nation values and prioritizes. In a time of growing income and wealth disparity in our nation, a faithful budget prioritizes the common good. NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice is honored to be a part of the Faithful Budget in our interfaith effort to promote the common good. This budget can be summarized as: reasonable revenue for responsible programs. We call on Congress to act responsibly for all of our people and enact a faithful budget.”

Patrick Carolan, Executive Director, Franciscan Action Network:

“Our elected officials carry the important duty of providing for the needs of all human beings and God’s creation as Pope Francis encourages in his encyclical, *Laudato Si*. The budget is a moral document that must ensure even the most vulnerable are cared for and protected. We must promote justice in all aspects of society and work on building peace among neighbors and nations, instead of conflict.”

Rev. Jason Carson Wilson, United Church of Christ, Justice & Witness Ministries, Justice & Peace Policy Fellow:

"A faithful budget doesn't fund walls. It builds roads and bridges. A faithful budget provides a safety net, so low-income families can live in dignity. A faithful budget prioritizes peace. A faithful budget can set us on path toward a just world for all."

Sister Patricia Chappell, SNDdeN, Executive Director of Pax Christi USA:

"All budgets reflect our values and the moral imperative to do no harm. A Faithful budget proclaims loudly that ALL people matter, not just recipients of tax breaks and loopholes. As people committed to peace with justice, we believe that a faithful budget prioritizes people over politics, bridges over walls, caring and concern for each other over weapons and warfare. It is a snapshot of who America really cares about."

Colin Christopher, Director, Office for Interfaith and Community Alliances, Islamic Society of North America:

"As we look toward reforming our unjust tax code, let us remember that the size of the pie isn't the problem here in these great United States of America. We are living in an era of abundance and yet we suffer from distribution delusion, distracted by the survival strategy of scraping by to make ends meet. The bottom three-fourths of our nation fight over the scraps, while the top fourth--especially the top 1%--benefit from a Smörgåsbord of economic advantages cooked into the rule book. It is time for our representatives to craft legislation that equitably collects taxes, fully funds social programs, and eliminates the loopholes that only help the wealthiest among us.

"The Prophet Muhammad reminded us of our obligation to our community when he said, "He is not a believer whose stomach is filled while the neighbor to his side goes hungry." When one in six American household is food insecure, we are assured of our immoral priorities, and yet we are presented with yet another opportunity to do what is just. Let us take advantage of this moment and do what is right."

Larry Couch, Director, National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd:

"The first consideration that a legislator should give to proposed legislation is: What effects will this legislation have on people living in poverty? If we are to pursue the common good, the needs of poor people must be front and center. We cannot let human needs be given second place to providing yet another tax break to people whose income is in the upper one percent.

"Currently family incomes in this country are insufficient to meet the basic needs of 40 percent of our children. Sadly, this economic insecurity can result in lifelong damage, stunting mental, physical, and emotional development.

"In addition, living in crowded conditions coupled with food insecurity can lead to an increase in depression, domestic violence, and drug abuse. Recent studies had shown that many opioid overdoses are 'deaths of despair,' deaths brought on by joblessness and hopelessness.

"The gap between rich and poor continues to grow. This disparity between the accumulation of extreme wealth and the inescapability of extreme poverty threatens the dignity of human beings and is destructive to our society. By following the principles outlined in a Faithful Budget, we can do better."

Rev. Dr. Susan Henry-Crowe, General Secretary, General Board of Church and Society of The United Methodist Church:

"The federal budget is a reflection of who and what we value as a nation. As people of faith called to seek justice and pursue peace, we prayerfully advocate for a new vision for our budget. A budget that prioritizes peace-making over war-making. A budget that responds to the needs of the many rather than catering to the greed of a few. A budget that invests in life-giving and life-sustaining priorities and reflects our shared value of caring for the common good. I urge members of Congress to seize this moment as an opportunity to truly create a moral budget."

Rev. Reggie Jackson, Director, Office of Social Justice: Christian Reformed Church:

"Budgets are moral documents of what we truly cherish as Americans. Thus continued robust funding of programs for the poor gives evidence of our commitment to be a generous nation."

Rev. John L. McCullough, President and CEO, Church World Service:

"The sacred responsibility of government is the well-being of the human person. All people should have access to nutritious food, clean water, adequate shelter, good schools, reasonable health care, and protection of their human rights. The United States helps make this possible when it provides robust funding for relief, development and refugee assistance throughout the developing world."

Sr. Patricia McDermott, RSM, President, Institute Leadership Team, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas:

"The Sisters of Mercy seek to practice nonviolence and peace-making, care for Earth, accompany immigrants and refugees, and serve and advocate with persons who are impoverished or marginalized, especially women. We urge members of Congress to honor the dignity and worth of all persons by passing a budget that upholds these values and that answers Pope Francis' challenge to all of us to respond to the cry of the Earth and the cry of those who are poor. Sisters of Mercy working around the country have seen firsthand the impact that budgetary decisions can have on persons who are poor and vulnerable, and we will actively pray and engage with members of Congress to ensure that the full impact of those decisions are understood through the stories of people with whom we live and minister."

Rabbi Jonah Dov Pesner, Director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism and Senior Vice President of the Union for Reform Judaism:

"Where the proposed House and White House budgets fall short, the Faithful Budget offers a moral alternative. As Jews, we are called to embrace the orphan, the widow, and the stranger, and love our neighbors as ourselves. The budget priorities of the federal government must focus on lifting people up and protecting the most vulnerable members of society."

Diane Randall, Executive Secretary, Friends Committee on National Legislation:

"The fiscal questions before this Congress will have a deep and lasting effect on communities and families—particularly those in need— across this nation. Government investments are essential in fostering a nation where everyone flourishes: nutrition assistance for young children at risk of hunger, housing assistance for families unable to afford a safe and stable home, protection of our cities and towns against sea level rise and the effects of climate change. Our investments in international assistance to prevent violent conflict around the world and respond to humanitarian crises help promote peace. At the same time, our budget should help us move

away from endless war, militarizing our border, and perpetuating our system of mass incarceration. These aren't just budget numbers. These are moral decisions that articulate our country's values and will shape our country's future."

Shantha Ready Alonso, Executive Director, Creation Justice Ministries:

"God has given us everything we need for an abundant life. Yet our collective failure to care for the gifts of God's creation causes the most vulnerable among us to suffer. A faithful budget ensures everyone can access the most basic necessities for life: safe water and clean air."

Sandy Sorensen, Director, Washington Office, United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries:

"Our many faith traditions teach us that we shall be judged by how we care for the most vulnerable among us. A commitment to the common good is a core faith value. A federal budget that excludes our most vulnerable communities from accessing the services they need is quite simply immoral. We live in a country of great abundance, yet economic inequality continues to grow exponentially. This trajectory will ultimately harm all of us. Our faith compels us to do nothing less than tirelessly advocate for a federal budget that truly reflects our values as a nation, one that cares for the vulnerable, protects the Earth, promotes the common good and moves us toward true global security."

Sr. Joan Marie Steadman, CSC, Executive Director, Leadership Conference of Women Religious:

"As women religious called to serve all of God's people and to care for God's creation, we ask members of Congress to craft a faithful budget that promotes the life and dignity of all, defends the most vulnerable among us, advances the common good, and protects our planet home. We pledge our efforts and our prayers to ensure that the FY18 budget meets the needs of all people and reflects the core values of our nation."

Jim Winkler, President, National Council of Churches:

"10 years ago, I was part of a small group of faith leaders who met with then US Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid to share with him our conviction that the federal budget is a moral document. He read our statement, looked up, and said to us, 'I have until now always thought of the budget simply as a budget, but I agree it is in fact a moral document and I intend to read your statement into the Congressional Record.' Today, we continue to affirm the budget is a moral document and we insist our elected officials place front and center the needs of the least, the last, and the lost."

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