



Sisters of the Good Shepherd

The National
Advocacy Center

To: Members of the Senate and House Budget Committees
From: Alison Prevost, Lobbyist
Date: March 8, 2005
Re: FY 2006 Budget

Dear Senate/Representative,

I am writing to express serious concerns the National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd has about the President's FY2006 budget proposal. The National Advocacy Center, drawing from Gospel values, Catholic Social Teaching, and Good Shepherd spirituality, maintains that the federal budget must be viewed through a moral lens and evaluated according to how well it protects all of life by promoting the common good, caring for those who are poor and vulnerable, upholding economic justice, and advancing peace and reconciliation. From this perspective, we are deeply disappointed by the budget proposal put forward by the president, which once again unjustly prioritizes tax cuts that mainly benefit the wealthy over real investments in programs and services that promote greater opportunity and economic security for all Americans. We urge you to speak out in favor of a more just budget that focuses on reducing not only the monetary deficit, but the social deficit of many people's basic needs continuing to go unmet in this country and throughout the world.

Despite having contributed little to the return to deficits, a number of programs serving lower-income populations are singled out for cuts in the President's budget in his effort to reduce the deficit. These cuts to Medicaid, housing and community development programs, education and job training, child care, and other critical services will have a devastating impact on states, communities, and particularly the most vulnerable members of our society – many of whom are served by Good Shepherd programs throughout the country. According to a variety of analyses, 1.8 million children could lose health insurance, 300,000 fewer child care subsidies would be available, and hundreds of thousands of families would lose housing assistance by 2010 under the President's proposals. At the same time, the President's budget calls for a continuation of the costly and inequitable tax cuts of 2001 and 2003 and promotes unbalanced budget rules that would open the door to even more tax cuts while locking in harmful long-term spending cuts. Such priorities not only violate the values that guide the National Advocacy Center, but also the fundamental American values of fairness, justice, and opportunity for all.

In addition, we continue to be troubled by choices that invest many times the amount in the military and preparations for war than in programs and assistance that build and sustain peace. Although encouraged by some modest increases in international assistance in the President's budget, these are dwarfed by the continuing growth of the military budget. We recognize that there are legitimate security needs that must be met, but we believe that funding, particularly for questionable programs such as missile defense and new nuclear weapons, can and should be redirected to promote a broader vision of global human security.

Therefore, as the budget committee prepares its budget resolution this week, we urge you to:

- **Oppose unrealistic and draconian budget caps on domestic discretionary spending.** These caps will increasingly restrict the government's capacity to respond to future contingencies and to truly promote equal opportunity for all.

- **Reject deep cuts to mandatory programs.** We are deeply concerned about cuts to programs like Medicaid, child care, food stamps, adoption assistance, foster care, and the Earned Income Tax Credit that would reduce services to millions of people.
- **Speak out against harmful and unfair budget rules** that would protect tax cuts while inflicting severe reductions in programs serving low-income populations and working families. The burden of deficit reduction should not be placed on society's most vulnerable members.
- **Promote a more balanced approach to deficit reduction** that places all parts of the budget on the table. Reconsideration of the tax cuts of 2001 and 2003 and smarter investments in national and global security are critical to ensuring that adequate resources are available.

In the pastoral letter, *Economic Justice for All*, the U.S. Catholic bishops write, "We know that, at times, in order to remain truly a community of Jesus' disciples, we will have to say "no" to certain aspects in our culture, to certain trends and ways of acting that are opposed to a life of faith, love, and justice (#64)." While we recognize there are many difficult decisions to be made in the budget debate this year, the National Advocacy Center believes that this is a time to say "no" to the misguided priorities of the President's budget. We unite ourselves with comments offered by Bishop Skylstad in his February 15th letter to Congress: "These are tough times. There are few easy choices. But there are "right" choices...our nation's leaders must ensure that there are adequate resources to protect people who are poor and vulnerable both at home and around the world."

Sincerely,

Alison L. Prevost, *Lobbyist*