



## American Friends Service Committee

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Dear Senator:

Our nation's budget should be a clear manifestation of our shared values and aspirations. Even in hard times such as these, we are a wealthy nation with the means and wisdom to protect the most vulnerable among us and build for the future. In this light, we write to ask that you put the wellbeing of people first in your deliberations over the FY11 and FY12 budgets, to preserve non-military discretionary funding at requested levels and to apply fiscal discipline in reducing swollen military spending levels that have doubled since just over a decade ago.

The national debt – caused by a combination of reduced revenues from tax cuts for the most prosperous among us, soaring health care costs which affect us all, and two wars funded with off-budget appropriations of over a *trillion* dollars – should not be used as a scare tactic to drive further cuts to the small slice of the budget most critical to the common good.

The non-military discretionary budget, which represents less than 15% of overall federal spending, is a critical key to economic recovery and the wellbeing of this and future generations. Many of the most important investments in enduring peace and human security do not have vocal constituencies, but nonetheless stand to improve this nation profoundly over the long term. These budget items rely on the wisdom and courage of legislators like you to affirm their value and protect our shared commitment, especially in hard times.

Dozens of high-impact initiatives such as the U.S. Institute of Peace, the Complex Crisis Fund, and Head Start have been threatened with cuts or elimination in the House-passed FY11 spending measure – yet these are incredibly cost-effective investments in our nation's future that should be preserved and cultivated. The already-frayed safety net of programs that seek to support minimum human needs should be protected and fully funded to meet the very real crises so many communities and families face today. The underfunded accounts which support international development and non-military engagement that are essential to global stability and human security need to be enhanced to meet current challenges. The deep cuts proposed in the non-military discretionary budget will leave our essential safety nets in ruins while failing to meet the stated objectives of the proposed cuts.

If Congress is serious about addressing the deficit, legislators must challenge the assertion that military spending must remain untouchable in the budget debate. The U.S. is responsible for nearly *half of all military spending the world over*, accounting for nearly 60 percent of the U.S. discretionary budget. Yet the Government Accountability Office and the Department of Defense's own Inspector General have found the Defense Department to be so ill-managed as to be deemed "unauditable". Surely no other federal department could operate in this manner without intense congressional scrutiny.

Even military experts are clear that substantial cuts to the defense budget can be made without reducing national security. The National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility led by Erskine Bowles and Alan Simpson identified \$100 billion in cuts to defense spending that could be made immediately without compromising military readiness by any measure. In addition, the Sustainable Defense Task Force, supported by a diverse group including Representatives Barney Frank, Walter Jones and Ron Paul, has provided recommendations for cuts that would save \$960 billion over the next ten years.

In addition to addressing our nation's level of military spending, a path to greater fiscal stability for the U.S. must include attention to federal revenues, including a more just approach to taxation. Tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans and corporations have played a central role in undermining our ability to balance the budget, and cannot be sustained. According to a report by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, *the deficit in 2021 would be cut nearly in half simply by letting the Bush tax cuts expire*. The tax cut plan passed last December compromises basic principles of fairness, as more than a quarter of the benefits accrued to the wealthiest 1% among us. These cuts have not been shown to provide a significant boost to the economy, especially when compared with other forms of stimulus.

Economists affirm that stimulus remains necessary if our economy is to fully recover. But recently proposed structural changes to our budget system, rather than further equipping us to respond to times such as these, would undermine our ability to provide the kind of counter-cyclical spending needed to address this crisis. "Cutgo" rules, revenue caps and balanced-budget requirements limit the tools we have to facilitate economic growth. Please oppose them.

Our national network of organizers, advocates, and community leaders looks forward to working with you in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress to ensure that our national budget reflects a practical vision of hope and hard work, not fear and injustice. Efforts to reign in our current deficit must not undermine our future. Our shared values will show us the way to provide for a more balanced budget *and* support the most vulnerable. At this pivotal moment in our nation's history we need your leadership, and we offer our support.

Sincerely,



Shan Cretin  
General Secretary  
American Friends Service Committee

*In more than forty cities across the U.S. and in Asia, Africa, North and South America and the Middle East, the American Friends Service Committee serves and partners with communities in development, social justice, and peace programs. Founded in 1917 by Quakers seeking to offer opportunities for humanitarian service in wartime, our work is rooted in the Quaker faith in the worth and dignity of every person. The organization's mission and achievements won worldwide recognition in 1947 when it accepted the Nobel Peace Prize with the British Friends Service Council on behalf of all Quakers.*