

## ***INTERRELIGIOUS WORKING GROUP ON DOMESTIC HUMAN NEEDS***

July 25, 2006

Members  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington D.C. 20515

### **Re: Faith Groups' Opposition to "Results Commission" and "Sunset Commission" Legislation**

Dear Representative:

As members of the faith community grounded in a shared tradition of justice and compassion, we are writing to express our serious concern about the significant budget process changes proposed in Rep. Tiahrt's H.R. 5766 and Rep. Brady's H.R. 3282. We urge you to vote against these two bills when they come to the House floor this week.

Over the past several years, we have written to you many times to express our vision for a moral budget, and our opposition when budget decisions fail to meet this vision's values of community and the common good. We feel strongly that the federal budget must protect the most vulnerable members of society and promote greater economic justice. While previous statements have mostly addressed the priorities revealed in specific tax and spending decisions, we also believe the budget *process* plays an important role in shaping priorities and are compelled to speak against budget rules that threaten these values.

We are particularly concerned about the potential impact of these bills on programs serving low-income and vulnerable populations. Lacking the political strength to oppose any recommended reductions in services, especially on the fast-track legislative schedule described in the bills, millions of children, low-income families, elderly, and people with disabilities could be overlooked in the rush to cut spending. These vulnerable people are very likely to be left without critical life-giving services, and our partners across the country, working in faith-based and social helping agencies, are very likely to be left with even fewer resources to meet increasing needs. This proposal threatens to place an unfair burden of deficit reduction on programs that serve the poor, elderly and disabled – programs that have contributed very little to current deficits.

Our commitment to community and the common good also leads us to question the "congressional fast track" provisions included in both bills. Negative effects of these provisions include:

- The expansion of executive power and limitation of public participation;
- The distancing of program evaluation and termination from those affected; and
- The ability of appointed officials to override congressional evaluation and termination processes with no public accountability.

Finally, from the perspective of economic justice, we object the fact that neither bill would permit the commissions to propose elimination or reduction of any of the \$800 billion a year spent through provisions that the Joint Committee on Taxation and OMB have called "tax expenditures." In fairness, a comprehensive review of all expenditures should include tax expenditures.

As people of faith, we value good stewardship and support balanced efforts to restore fiscal discipline, however, these bills do not represent these values. We urge you to vote against this legislation and any other legislation containing the provisions discussed above and to work toward budget policies that lift up the most vulnerable, promote economic justice for all, and strengthen our life and future together as a nation and as part of the global community.

If you have questions or concerns, please contact Ruth Flower at the Friends Committee on National Legislation, 202-547-6000 x2524 or by e-mail at [flower@fcnl.com](mailto:flower@fcnl.com).

Sincerely,

American Friends Service Committee  
Friends Committee on National Legislation  
National Advocacy Center Sisters of the Good Shepherd  
National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.  
NETWORK: A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Washington Office  
Sojourners/Call to Renewal  
United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries  
The United Methodist Church – General Board of Church & Society