



Sowers of Justice

Catholic Legislative Network

**Action
Alert**

Federal Budget Cuts Pass; Tax Cuts Next

February 7, 2006

Background:

After a long battle, Congress narrowly approved a federal budget with significant cuts to several key safety net programs on February 1. The consequences are stark for low-income citizens:

- More than 600,000 Minnesotans who rely on Medicaid for health care will find fewer services covered, higher co-pays, and in some cases, no coverage at all.
- Children relying on child support payments will lose \$83 million in support payments over five years, as this bill cut much of the funding for the means to collect those payments.
- More restrictive federal rules for the state's welfare-to-work program will require more low-income families to work without providing the child care funds needed to make that possible.
- Counties will likely cut child protection workers and staff who work with the mentally ill and developmentally disabled because the primary means of funding those staff has been cut.

Thank you for responding to the numerous action alerts OSJ sent in recent months asking you to defend these programs. While we are not happy with the results, the faith community can be proud of our efforts. Our pressure, along with the work of a broad range of citizen advocates, helped sway Rep. Jim Ramstad to withdraw his support for the cuts when the final vote was taken.

Now the focus shifts in two directions:

- **Budget Reconciliation II:** The 2005 budget reconciliation process allows for \$70 billion in tax cuts—significantly more than the \$40 billion in spending, meaning the overall impact is an increase in the federal deficit. These cuts are being deliberated in conference committee. OSJ will monitor this situation, and contact you when advocacy opportunities arise.
- **The FY 2007 Budget.** On February 6, President Bush submitted a \$2.7 trillion spending plan to Congress. The Administration's budget continues a familiar course, undercutting efforts to assist low-income Americans. It includes \$187 billion in cuts to non-defense programs, while cutting \$285 billion in taxes over the same period. Cuts are slated for numerous programs to assist low-income families, children, elderly and disabled people, as well as education and environmental protection programs.

Recommended Action:

1. Contact your federal legislators. Thank those who voted against the federal budget cuts, and express your disappointment to those who voted for them.
2. Tell your federal legislators that the tax cuts portion of the 2005 budget reconciliation process AND the President's 2007 proposed budget both continue a harmful course. Encourage them to work for full funding of programs for America's low-income citizens and to advocate fiscal responsibility.

FFI: Contact Matt Rezac at 651-291-4536

How Minnesota's Federal Delegation Voted on the Budget Cuts

Sen. Coleman:	YES
Sen. Dayton:	No
Rep. Gutknecht:	YES
Rep. Kline:	YES
Rep. Ramstad:	NO
Rep. McCollum:	NO
Rep. Sabo:	NO
Rep. Kennedy:	YES
Rep. Peterson:	NO
Rep. Oberstar:	NO

Contact Information

U.S. Senators

Senator Norm Coleman.....202-224-5641

Senator Mark Dayton.....202-224-3244

U.S. Representatives

1st District: Gil Gutknecht.....202-225-2472

2nd District: John Kline.....202-225-2271

3rd District: Jim Ramstad.....202-225-2871

4th District: Betty McCollum.....202-225-6631

5th District: Martin Olav Sabo.....202-225-4755

6th District: Mark Kennedy.....202-225-2331

7th District: Collin Peterson.....202-225-2165

8th District: James Oberstar: 202-225-6211

For further information you may contact the Capitol Switch Board
202-224-3121.