

Calling the Government Back to Work

Dear Member of Congress:

As people of faith and conscience, we urge you to place shared democratic values above short term political expediency, exercise the courage to fund our nation's government, raise the debt limit without preconditions and get back to work on a faithful budget that serves the common good.

Shuttering the federal government and propelling the United States into financial default to achieve narrow political objectives is short-sighted and self-destructive. The danger for all who value democracy – regardless of party affiliation – is apparent. One only needs to consider this precedent being applied to other policy concerns of a minority in Congress who are powerful within their own party but unable to create legislative change within the bounds of due process. Blocking routine but essential functions of government to extract specific policy concessions could destroy America's democratic process.

To take such rash and destructive action in order to prevent further implementation of the Affordable Care Act – which addresses the needs of 50 million people without health insurance -- is a grave moral failure. While the ACA has its limitations, it implements a market-based model with a history of bi-partisan support. Repealing or defunding it will hurt millions of people and many small businesses. We urge *all* members of Congress to stand up for our democracy and reject this futile and harmful effort.

Additional damage accrues each day the government remains in partial shutdown:

- Federal funding for the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program may not be able to cover all benefits. Some states have already closed WIC offices, and many participants are terrified that they won't be able to find nourishment for themselves or their infants and toddlers.
- An estimated 19,000 impoverished children are without preschool because of the shutdown, which left more than 20 programs across 11 states without funding on the heels of devastating sequester cuts. Those previous cuts had already shut out 57,000 at-risk children who lost their Head Start slots.
- Many low-wage workers are losing their paychecks or seeing their earnings dwindle even further. Examples include government mailroom clerks, many of whom are people with disabilities, who work for government contractors. Even if furloughed federal employees are eventually paid, many others who work for contractors have no such assurance.
- The Administration for Children and Families, which cares for children in abusive and violent family situations, announced that certain child welfare programs will not be funded during the shutdown.
- Our environmental wellbeing is suffering and our citizens are at risk as health inspectors, EPA inspectors and a myriad others who enforce important laws are unable to do their jobs.
- In addition, a failure to raise the debt limit on spending that Congress has *already approved* will undermine our still fragile economy and harm the global economy, especially the most vulnerable.

You hold a key to doing what is right for the American people, and we pray for you to act in the best interest of our nation. Once this unnecessary and dangerous stalemate is over, we count on you to act on behalf of all of our people and enact a Faithful Budget. Stop the partisan paralysis and uphold what our Constitution refers to as the "general welfare" – the common good of all.

With hope and a belief in the ultimate goodwill and good sense of Members of Congress, we hold you in our hearts and prayers.

[ENDORISING ORGANIZATIONS]

Am Kolel Jewish Jewish Renewal Community
(Md, DC, Va)

Center of Concern

Church of the Brethren

Church World Service

Conference of Major Superiors of Men

Disciples Justice Action Network (Disciples of Christ)

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Washington Office

Friends Committee on National Legislation

Justice and Witness Ministries, United Church of Christ

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd

NETWORK: A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

The Shalom Center

Unitarian Universalist Association

United Methodist Church General Board of Church and Society

American Friends Service Committee

Center on Conscience and War

Church Women United

Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach

Disciples Home Missions, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Ecumenical Advocacy Days for Global Peace with Justice

Franciscan Action Network

Interfaith Moral Action of Climate

Leadership Conference of Women Religious

Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Office of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation

The National Council of the Churches of Christ, USA

Pax Christi USA

Reconstructionist Rabbinical College

Sisters of Mercy of the Americas - Institute Leadership Team

United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries

United Methodist Women