National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA
National Council of Jewish Women
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
New Community Project
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Office of Public Witness
RESULTS Faith in Action
Sisters of Mercy Institute Justice Team
The Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
The United Methodist Church—General Board of Church and Society

COALITION ON HUMAN NEEDS

PROTECTING OUR NATION FROM BAD FEDERAL BUDGET CHOICES

A new round of federal budget cuts is slated to start on March 1. If nothing is done, the cuts will deny food to young children, turn low-income families out of their homes, and reduce funds for education and training. These indiscriminate across-the-board cuts (called ''sequestration'') come on top of an average 7.6 percent cut in federal funds to states since 2010. The looming federal cuts would make things worse, hurting vulnerable people, shifting burdens to states and localities, and threatening economic growth.

This does not have to happen. Increased revenues from wealthy individuals and profitable corporations as well as savings from reducing waste in the Pentagon and elsewhere can prevent these cuts. In fact, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) and other senators outlined a plan on February 14 (the American Family Economic Protection Act) that would replace the 2013 cuts by setting a minimum tax rate for millionaires, closing other loopholes, gradually cutting the Pentagon and ending certain farm subsidies. It will be up for a vote during the week of February 25. House Democrats have also introduced a balanced alternative.

These cuts will hurt our nation. The indiscriminate cuts have the potential to stall the beginnings of economic recovery because lost jobs and reduced assistance mean people will have less to spend. The recovery still had not reached the 7.9 percent of the U.S. workforce unemployed in January 2013. We should be investing in rebuilding our communities and training for workers, not throwing 10,000 teachers and aides in low-income schools out of work, with about 700,000 jobs expected to be lost overall because of sequestration. And the real hardships caused by 600,000 young children and mothers losing WIC food assistance and between 110,000–125,000 families losing their housing vouchers nationwide do not just hold back our economy this year. They threaten the health and development of children and the stability of families in ways that will cost all of us for years to come.

Revenues, Not Cuts. Closing loopholes for corporations and the wealthy can generate well over $2 trillion in federal revenue over the next 10 years. In order to stop the deficit from growing as a share of the economy, economists estimate that another $1.5 trillion is needed over the next decade, either from new revenues or cuts in spending. Millionaires, who have gained more than $1 million each from the Bush tax cuts since 2004, can afford to pay more. A 5.6 percent surtax on income over $1 million could raise more than $450 billion over 10 years—enough to cancel most of the decade of domestic cuts slated to begin with this March's sequestration. Taxing the profits of corporations sheltered offshore at the same rate as profits made in the U.S. can raise as much as $600 billion over 10 years.

Don't Touch SNAP and Medicaid. Congress should act now to stop the needless cuts in vital programs that will begin March 1, but should not replace them with cuts to essential services such as Medicaid or SNAP/food stamps. We have seen harsh proposals to cut these programs in the budget passed by the U.S. House for FY 2013 (but rejected by the Senate). The House budget would have slashed $134 billion from SNAP over 10 years, and $810 billion from Medicaid. If the SNAP cut were to be applied by reducing benefits equally across all households, a family of four would be expected to lose $90 a month in FY 2016 dollars. (This year, the national average monthly SNAP benefit for a family of four is $508.) Or, if the extreme cut were applied by making people ineligible, 8 million people nationwide would be denied all SNAP benefits. If the House budget's extreme Medicaid cut had been in place from 2001–2010, most states would have received at least 35 percent less in 2010 than they actually did, such a huge cut that millions of people nationwide would either be denied coverage altogether or would see their benefits slashed. Taking food and medical care from our state's poorest people is a wholly unacceptable alternative to the cuts about to be imposed.

The Pentagon Can Be Cut. The deficit reduction legislation now in place requires nearly $1 trillion in cuts between now and FY 2021, half from defense and half from domestic and international programs. Many experts believe that the Pentagon can be cut $500 billion or more over the next decade, and that such reductions will actually enhance our national security by ending wasteful expenditures and freeing up the funds for more productive uses or for deficit reduction. Even if $500 billion were cut, the U.S. would still be spending more on the military than the next 14 nations combined, most of whom are our allies. Some examples of possible Pentagon savings with expert support: reducing the number of troops assigned to overseas bases by 25 percent (not counting troops in war zones) would save $80 billion over the next ten years; reducing deployed nuclear warheads to 1,000–1,100 would save $28 billion over the same period; buying a reliable, cheaper jet rather than the problem-plagued F–35C would save close to $17 billion.

But Investments in Our Future—and Vulnerable People—Must Be Protected. More than 1 in 5 children in the U.S. were poor in 2011. 13.2 percent of people between 18–24 nationwide had not finished high school. For poor children and young adults to succeed, we need to invest in all levels of education. But the sequestration cuts would deny Head Start to 70,000 children this year, and cut Title I K–12 education funding for schools in low-income communities by nearly $726 million, an amount equal to dropping services for 1.2 million low-income children. For our economy to grow, workers must be able to increase their skills, but federal job training funds will be cut by more than $160 million nationwide if the sequester reductions occur this year, and more than 75,000 workers with disabilities will not be able to enroll in vocational rehabilitation services. In a time of rising inequality and more people falling out of the middle class into poverty, we need more routes out of poverty. But the impending cuts would deny Work-Study aid to 33,000 students. Struggling workers will be hit repeatedly: if they are among the long-term unemployed, cuts in federal emergency unemployment compensation will force an up to 9.4 percent cut in benefits, estimated at an average loss of $400 for the rest of this year. If they are parents working or looking for work, they may lose child care assistance; the cuts are expected to end child care subsidies for 30,000 children across the country.

We cannot sustain and expand economic recovery while pushing our most vulnerable people into more desperate straits. The cuts about to take effect will take away rental assistance vouchers from between 110,000–125,000 families nationwide. These vouchers limit the families' rent payments to 30 percent of their income. If they were abruptly expected to pay market rents, large numbers of these families will be forced out of their apartments, with increasing homelessness a certainty. At the same time, sequestration will end housing assistance to approximately 100,000 formerly homeless people nationwide, including veterans. To add to poor families' struggles to afford housing, home energy assistance will be cut an estimated $180 million. Even without this cut, rising heating costs mean that aid under the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is expected to average only $375 per household served in 2013, down from $405 in 2012.

Even though there is ample evidence that adequate nutrition is vital for brain development in the first years of life, the impending indiscriminate cuts would deny WIC nutrition aid to 600,000 mothers, infants, and young children. The cuts will also jeopardize the health of seniors, with 4 million fewer meals delivered nationwide.

Cuts That Increase Joblessness and Disinvest in Our People Will Weaken the Nation. Congress should stop the mindless across-the-board sequestration cuts. Instead, it should enact a balanced package with enough revenues from the wealthy and corporations and sensible Pentagon and other savings to protect our children, our workers, and our seniors.

Those who oppose any new revenues or Pentagon savings should be asked why they think it is more important to preserve, for example, hundreds of billions in corporate tax incentives to shift jobs and profits offshore or to waste hundreds of billions in unneeded weapons and bases than to prevent cuts in education, housing, nutrition, environmental protection, public health, child care, rebuilding communities, and many other investments.

SEQUESTER DAMAGE

Children and mothers losing WIC nutrition aid: 600,000.
Low-income families losing rental housing vouchers: 125,000.
Formerly homeless people losing housing: 100,000.
Children denied Head Start: 70,000.
Funding cut from Head Start: $406m.
Children denied affordable child care: 30,000.
$ cuts deep enough to end services to these many low-income K–12 children: $1.2b.
Fewer people with disabilities served by Vocational Rehab: 75,700.
Fewer meals on wheels served to seniors: 4m.
Adults and children with serious mental illness losing treatment: 373,000.
Unemployment benefits cut for long-term unemployed: 9.4%.
Jobs lost because of sequestration: 700,000.

INTRODUCTION OF THE RACIAL PROFILING PREVENTION ACT

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 26, 2013

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce a bill, the Racial Profile Prevention Act, to reestablish a federal grant program for states that desire to develop racial profiling laws, collect and maintain data on traffic

stops, design programs to reduce racial profiling, and train law enforcement officers, which we were successful in getting included in the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA–LU) in 2005. Although that grant program was just a small piece of the large SAFETEA–LU bill, nearly half of the states participated in the program for multiple years. This experience speaks to the usefulness of the program to states. Racial profiling is a form of racial discrimination that was thrust back into the forefront of national concern by the tragic killing of Trayvon Martin, who died one year ago today.

Racial profiling on roads built with federal funds is a violation of Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, because it amounts to a government subsidy of discrimination. However, while racial profiling remains more widespread in our country than most other forms of discrimination, there is little experience in developing legislation in this sensitive area to address racial profiling while allowing for appropriate law enforcement. My bill would help states to better develop their racial profiling laws and help train law enforcement to avoid these problems.

My bill imposes no mandates on states. Instead, it simply authorizes a grant program, but does not require states to participate. However, it provides resources that many states and localities clearly need if they are to curb racial profiling.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. ELIZABETH H. ESTY

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 26, 2013

Ms. ESTY. Mr. Speaker, I want to state that on February 15, I missed several rollcall votes due to the Citizens Medal ceremony honoring the following constituents, Rachel Davino, Anne Marie Murphy, Lauren Rousseau, Victoria Soto, Mary Sherlach, and Dawn Hochsprung. These six extraordinarily talented and courageous teachers and administrators dedicated their lives to education and to the children of Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, Connecticut. When unimaginable tragedy struck, they gave their lives protecting those same children. As a community, Newtown will always feel their loss. As a country, we will always look to their courage. Had I been present I would have voted:

I. Nay—H. Con. Res. 15—Adjournment Resolution: I would have voted ''nay'' as the House should stay in session and work to find a reasonable alternative to the irrational, across-the-board spending cuts in the pending sequester.

2. Aye—Final Passage of H.R. 273: I would have voted ''aye'' to prevent a pay increase for Members of Congress in 2013 and am an original cosponsor of a bill to prevent a pay increase for Members of Congress for the entire 113th Congress. In these tough economic times and until the budget is balanced, it's not fair for Members of Congress to receive any form of pay increase when others are asked to cut their budgets.

3. Aye—Final Passage of H. Res. 65: Condemning the Government of North Korea for its flagrant and repeated violations of multiple United Nations Security Council resolutions, for its repeated provocations that threaten international peace and stability, and for its February 12, 2013 test of a nuclear device.

NEIL A. ARMSTRONG FLIGHT RESEARCH CENTER AND HUGH L. DRYDEN AERONAUTICAL TEST RANGE DESIGNATION ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 25, 2013

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about H.R. 667, a bill to rename the Dryden Flight Center as the Neil A. Armstrong Flight Research Center. I, along with millions around the world were terribly saddened to hear the news this past August of the passing of Neil Armstrong, a genuine American hero and an inspiration to countless people around the world. This bill was introduced as one way of paying tribute to a man who exemplified the true meaning of public service through a life of inspiring others through his bravery and self-sacrifice. It would rename the Dryden Flight Research Center at Edwards Air Force Base as the Neil A. Armstrong Flight Research Center, while still naming the Western Aeronautical Test Range within the center as the Hugh L. Dryden Aeronautical Test Range. For those who may be unfamiliar with him, Dr. Dryden was a true aeronautics visionary, and an individual worthy of our recognition and esteem.

Last year, in my capacity as ranking member of the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, I had the opportunity to participate in the Congressional Gold Medal ceremony honoring Mr. Neil Armstrong, along with John Glenn, who is also a former senator, Michael Collins and Edwin ''Buzz'' Aldrin, Jr. Each of these individuals is a genuine national hero and worthy of our gratitude. They and the astronauts that preceded and followed them were willing to put their lives at risk and sometimes make the ultimate sacrifice in order to push back the frontiers of knowledge and help our country achieve preeminence in space exploration.

Yet, it is clear from the way he carried himself and his public statements, that Mr. Armstrong did not seek public tributes such as the House is voting on today. Instead, he cared deeply about the future of our Nation's space program, and in his testimony to our Committee he stressed the importance of sustaining our commitment to a strong NASA. So it's worse than ironic that in the same week that we are voting to rename a NASA Center for him, we are going to allow a sequestration to proceed that will make devastating cuts to NASA's budget and set back the very human space exploration and aeronautics activities that Mr. Armstrong championed when he was alive. These cuts will also hurt the Flight Research Center we are proposing to rename, likely leading to layoffs and furloughs of dedicated individuals who work at the Center—individuals who in many cases were probably inspired by both Dr. Dryden and Mr. Armstrong's examples to work for NASA in the first place.

Mr. Speaker, we can and should do better than this. I would urge the Majority to bring a bill to avoid this sequester to the House floor this week so we can vote on it. We should not be cutting our critical investments in R&D and in NASA. That is no way to honor the legacy of either Neil Armstrong or Hugh Dryden.