



THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

The Most Reverend Katharine Jefferts Schori
Presiding Bishop and Primate

March 30, 2009

Dear Senator:

I write, as Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, to urge you to co-sponsor a critical amendment Senators Kerry and Lugar will offer to the FY'10 Budget resolution. The Kerry-Lugar amendment will restore funding for our nation's foreign-assistance programs to the level set forth in the President's budget request, \$53.8 billion, reversing the cuts made by the Budget Committee and fulfilling commitments to essential programs around the world. We believe these programs are foundational to U.S. security and our global credibility.

Like most Americans, I am deeply mindful of the challenges of passing a federal budget in a time of financial distress and limited resources. Within the community of The Episcopal Church, the strain of the current economic situation is being felt church-wide: in dioceses, congregations, families, and in our programs and institutions that serve those in greatest need. Nevertheless, we continue to hear from our partners in poor countries around the world that the deep impact of the global financial crisis on their own livelihoods is going unnoticed by the West. Indeed, the World Bank warns that the global economic turmoil will force more than 50 million people in developing countries into deadly poverty this year alone, with under-five child deaths rising as much as four percent.

Despite the need to deal with our nation's domestic fiscal challenges, at a time when the world's poorest people need America's partnership the most, it would be tragic to reverse the commitments and progress our nation has made to fighting global poverty.

Over the past five years, U.S. spending on foreign aid has risen as a result of an overwhelming bipartisan consensus that it is in our national interest to help the world's most vulnerable people. Foreign assistance remains a tiny fraction of our nation's budget – less than one percent – and yet its impact around the world is substantial. American aid saves millions of lives each year. It puts children in school, helps women start businesses to provide for their families, prevents the spread of malaria and HIV, and assists farmers working to improve their crops and local economies. Particularly at a time when our nation is seeking to rebuild relationships around the world, our commitment to life-saving foreign aid is something in which all Americans should take pride.

Moreover, there is overwhelming consensus among foreign-policy experts that robust U.S. foreign aid is vital to the security of our nation and the world. As Secretary of Defense Gates has noted, "America's civilian institutions of diplomacy and development have been chronically

undermanned and under-funded for far too long - relative to what we spend on the military, and more important, relative to the responsibilities and challenges our nation has around the world."

While the President's budget request for foreign-aid programs, \$53.8 billion, represents an increase of approximately \$4 billion over last-year's full appropriation, it is important to note that this is a smaller total increase than in recent years. Even if fully appropriated by Congress, it would require very difficult decisions about how money is spent, and how it is split between agency personnel and on-the-ground programming. Fully funding the Administration's budget may require the slowing of certain life-saving programs, such as HIV/AIDS and malaria, to which our nation already has offered commitments. To provide flat-line funding at the FY'09 level as recommended by the Budget Committee, however, would devastate the progress our nation has made in fighting global poverty just at a time when the world's poor can afford it the least.

The Judeo-Christian scriptural tradition instructs us that one of the marks of a wise nation, and a nation whose works find favor in God's sight, is the willingness to respond to human suffering wherever it occurs. Of a wise national leader, the prophet Jeremiah writes, "he gave the poor a fair trial, and all went well with him." As you prepare to vote on the federal budget resolution – an outline of the values and priorities of our nation – I urge you to support the Kerry-Lugar amendment and continue the American tradition of bringing hope and healing to those suffering most in our world.

With continued prayers for your service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Katharine Jefferts Schori". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Katharine Jefferts Schori