



February 9, 2012

Dear Member of Congress:

In the coming weeks, Congress will begin to craft the FY 2013 federal budget. The undersigned national Jewish organizations recognize the significant challenges facing our country and the immense pressures to reduce the deficit and national debt. Any budget you pass must be carefully calibrated to ensure that the most vulnerable among us are protected while our national interests are preserved.

The Jewish community's commitment to ending poverty is encapsulated in the sacred teachings of the Torah, where it is commanded: "There Shall Be No Needy Among You." (Deuteronomy 15:4). Our tradition informs us that helping fellow human beings, or *tzedakah*, is not simply a matter of charity, but truly one of responsibility, righteousness, and justice. These values frame our civic engagement. In response, our community has organized social service networks that offer care and support for more than one million of the most vulnerable people in our nation, Jews and non-Jews alike. We build housing for the elderly and persons with disabilities, offer vocational training to those in search of work, help resettle refugees and integrate new immigrants, feed the hungry, and provide social services for children and families who are struggling. We also have long been involved with the annual federal budget process, advocating for policies and programs that assist the most at-risk and help strengthen the foundations of our society. Accordingly, we believe that in your development of the FY 2013 budget, you should take the following principles into consideration:

- Deficit reduction requires shared sacrifice and should be balanced, while positively influencing economic growth and job creation;
- Spending cuts should not unfairly target the most vulnerable among us, whose lifelines are dependent on such critical assistance programs as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), the Emergency Food and Shelter Program, the Community Services Block Grant, the Older Americans Act, the Social Service Block Grant, Sections 202 and 811 housing, and the Community Development Block Grant; and
- Robust U.S. engagement in international affairs, including strong support for Israel, should remain a critical national priority.

Major entitlement programs protect the health and economic security of our most vulnerable citizens. Within the current framework of Medicaid and Medicare, we believe that it is possible to restrain growth and rein in costs. Any reductions to Medicaid and

Medicare should stem from efficiencies that improve service while reducing costs as well as targeted efforts to eradicate fraud, waste, and abuse. The United States is capable of strengthening the long-term viability of these programs without a fundamental restructuring that turns Medicaid into a block grant or Medicare into a voucher.

We know the value of philanthropy in meeting the needs of the vulnerable. Charities provide billions of dollars of vital services to low- and middle-income individuals and families and employ a significant percentage of the workforce. Further pressures on non-profits would lead to a decrease in important services on which millions of Americans rely. Any reform of the tax code should not reduce the charitable tax deduction and other giving incentives so that America's charities can continue to provide critical social services at this time of profound and increasing need.

In addition to concerns about cuts to domestic programs, we recognize that foreign aid is an essential part of American foreign policy and national security strategy. Foreign aid is an effective way for the United States to confront numerous challenges around the globe and should be preserved. Aid plays a critical role in our national security by promoting stability, providing humanitarian assistance to impoverished people, and encouraging democratic values in the international area. By creating jobs and economic growth, U.S. aid provides an alternative to extremism and stabilizes regions of potential and current unrest.

Support for Israel is a key element of the foreign aid program and should be fully funded. Each year, the United States provides important support for Israel to ensure her security. The promotion of security in Israel and the Palestinian territories is fundamental to the peace process, and an important goal of U.S. foreign policy.

Now, more than ever, the continuing economic recovery requires a federal budget that balances long-term fiscal discipline with the need to sustain critical services and elevate human needs. On behalf of the organized Jewish community, the Jewish Federations of North America and the Jewish Council for Public Affairs are pleased to work with you to craft a plan that balances the safeguarding of essential human services while undertaking necessary efforts to reduce the deficit. We urge you to pass a budget that reflects these current realities and the important work our organizations and charities do in our communities.

We look forward to working with you to shape your response to the budget proposals. For additional information, please contact Stephan Kline at The Jewish Federations of North America ([Stephan.Kline@JewishFederations.org](mailto:Stephan.Kline@JewishFederations.org) or 202/736-5864) or Elyssa Koidin at the Jewish Council for Public Affairs ([ekoidin@thejcpa.org](mailto:ekoidin@thejcpa.org) or 202/212-6039).

Sincerely,

American Jewish Committee  
Association of Jewish Aging Services  
Association of Jewish Family & Children's Agencies  
B'nai B'rith International  
Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society  
International Association of Jewish Vocational Services  
Jewish Council for Public Affairs  
The Jewish Federations of North America  
Jewish Labor Committee  
Jewish Reconstructionist Federation  
Jewish War Veterans  
Jewish Women International  
National Association of Jewish Chaplains  
National Conference on Soviet Jewry  
National Museum of American Jewish Military History  
Rabbinical Assembly  
Union for Reform Judaism  
Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America  
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