

# ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO

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## Memorandum

**To:** Pastors//Administrators  
**From:** Adrienne Curry, Program Director CRS/Justice Education  
**Date:** 5/27/2010  
**Re:** What your Advocacy Has Accomplished- Thanks for Your Domestic and International Advocacy Efforts!

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Thank you for your efforts to promote life and dignity through your advocacy on issues affecting our brothers and sisters in the United States and around the world! Below is a summary of advocacy efforts during the last several months, what has been accomplished, and what you can do to follow-up with your Congresspersons during the May 31-June 6 recess.

### Domestic Issues

**Tax Credits for Low-Income Persons:** We asked Congress to protect and strengthen key tax credits that make a difference to low-income workers and their families, the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Tax Credit. Both the House and Senate are currently developing tax legislation for consideration this summer, which should include both of these important tax credits.

**Housing:** Catholics across the U.S. participated in a sign-on letter to urge Congress to provide funding for the National Housing Trust Fund as a way to help communities build and preserve housing for people with the lowest incomes, as well as to create needed jobs. The Housing Trust Fund is part of a bill now being considered in the House of Representatives, *The American Jobs and Closing Tax Loopholes Act* (H.R. 4213).

**Health Care Reform:** President Obama signed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act into law March 23, 2010. The new law significantly reforms health care policy in the United States. While the Act does accomplish important goals supported by the bishops such as providing coverage to 32 million currently uninsured people, the bishops reluctantly opposed the final bill because of fundamental flaws in the areas of abortion, conscience protections and fair treatment of immigrants.

**Immigration Reform:** We are urging Congress to make reform of our broken immigration system a priority. Please continue your advocacy efforts during the Congressional recess to

ensure that comprehensive immigration reform moves as soon as possible and is consistent with Catholic teaching.

## **International Issues**

**Haiti:** We asked Congress to include emergency relief and long-term reconstruction in Haiti, *as well as* funds to respond to humanitarian needs in other parts of the world, such as Sudan, in the supplemental appropriations bill. We also asked Congress and the Administration to create a coherent strategy to help Haiti in the long-term. With your support, Congress passed the Haiti Economic Lift Program (HELP, S. 3275 and H.R. 5160) which is now awaiting the President's signature. This legislation extends and improves the trade preferences Haiti was granted through the HOPE Acts. Congress also passed the Debt Relief for Earthquake Recovery Act for Haiti (H.R. 4573 and S. 2961) and it is also awaiting the President's signature. This is a real accomplishment. Way to go, advocates!

**Congo:** We asked Congress to support the Conflict Minerals Trade Act (H.R. 4128) and the Congo Conflict Minerals Act (S. 891) in order to stop the violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo by reducing the use of illicitly mined minerals by militias to finance the conflict there. Both pieces of legislation are moving through Congress and are seriously being considered. We will keep advocates informed and will ask for your support if we need you to weigh in to help this legislation move further along.

**Holy Land:** We urged Congress and President Obama to exercise strong leadership for Holy Land peace. In a positive development, the U.S. is now brokering "proximity" or indirect talks between Israelis and Palestinians, but we need to continue supporting strong U.S. leadership because there is still a long road ahead.

**FY2010 Supplement Budget Request:** USCCB and CRS asked Congress to approve \$2.5 billion dollars for long term relief in Haiti and \$1.597 billion for other urgent emergency needs. Thanks to your efforts, it seems Congress will be generous with regards to Haiti and will meet other urgent needs, but final amounts have not been determined. Passage is expected.

**FY2011 International Affairs Budget:** In April, the Conference and CRS sent a letter to House and Senate Appropriations committees urging members to approve the Administration's modest increase in funding and to approve select increases in other important poverty-focused programs. The Senate may move to cut the overall international affairs budget by \$4 billion which would devastate poverty-reduction programs.

**Columbia:** We asked Congress to evaluate and refocus U.S. policy and assistance to Columbia. While Congress and the Administration have heard our concerns and have been receptive to our message, no concrete actions have yet been taken. Stay tuned for future updates and possible action on this issue.

**Nuclear Weapons:** We asked Representatives to co-sponsor the Global Security Priorities resolution, H. Res. 278, to reduce the number of and access to nuclear weapons and prevent their proliferation, and to use savings for child survival programs. Thanks to your continuing advocacy the resolution now has 34 co-sponsors. In the weeks ahead we hope to move it out of the Foreign Affairs Committee. Advocates in California's 28<sup>th</sup> Congressional district are urged to encourage Chairman Howard Berman to report the resolution to the floor.

We also urged Senators to ratify the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START), which reduces nuclear weapons in a verifiable way. Senate hearings have begun, but the process of Senate ratification will take some months so your continued advocacy of strong bipartisan support of the New START Treaty remains timely.

You can find out if your Congressperson co-sponsored particular legislation and how they voted on particular legislation by entering the bill number at [www.congress.gov](http://www.congress.gov). We hope that during the May 31-June 6 recess you will visit or contact your Congresspersons to thank them for their support when appropriate and to ask for their support on other issues.