



April 8, 2013

**An Open Letter to Members of the Minnesota Senate and Minnesota House of Representatives
From the Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

The Catholic and Lutheran bishops of Minnesota write to offer their greetings and thanks for your service to all Minnesotans.

We also write to express our concern about the problems of poverty and hunger in Minnesota. In our churches, we are committed to addressing not only the spiritual poverty that afflicts our communities, but also the many manifestations we see of material poverty.

Therefore, we ask both parties to work together toward a budget that alleviates poverty and works to build a hopeful future for all Minnesotans.

In 2004, religious leaders from across the state signed *A Common Foundation: Shared Principles for Work on Overcoming Poverty*. In 2006, legislators of both parties used this document to create the bi-partisan Legislative Commission to End Poverty in Minnesota by 2020.

In keeping with this tradition, and as part of our responsibility to speak out on behalf of the common good, we wish to offer to you, in a spirit of charity and humility, the attached letter sent by faith leaders around the country and from many different communities to federal lawmakers as they deal with difficult budget negotiations and decisions.

We believe the principles outlined in the letter are equally applicable in Minnesota. As you craft a budget to address revenue shortages, emerging needs, and a struggling economy, we believe it is essential to build a "Circle of Protection" around programs serving our neighbors who are in need.

We offer these key points from the letter:

1. We thank you for reducing the deficit while maintaining our government's responsibility for programs that serve people who are experiencing poverty and are vulnerable.
2. We understand Minnesota's fiscal health requires further cost savings and additional revenue be raised fairly.
3. It is time to frame the budget debate in terms of moral choices.
4. We plead for respectful bi-partisan dialogue and thoughtful engagement concerning our significant, complex problems.

Thank you for your consideration of our perspective. The bishops offer their prayers throughout the continued budget negotiations and support your efforts to promote human dignity and the common good.

Roman Catholic Bishops of Minnesota

Archbishop John Nienstedt
Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis
Bishop Michael Hoepfner, *Diocese of Crookston*
Bishop John Kinney, *Diocese of Saint Cloud*
Bishop John LeVoir, *Diocese of New Ulm*
Bishop Lee Piché, *Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis*
Bishop John Quinn, *Diocese of Winona*
Bishop Paul Sirba, *Diocese of Duluth*

ELCA Bishops of Minnesota

Bishop Jon Anderson, *Southwestern Minnesota Synod*
Bishop Thomas Aitken, *Northeastern Minnesota Synod*
Bishop Ann Svennungsen, *Minneapolis Area Synod*
Bishop Peter Rogness, *Saint Paul Area Synod*
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