



Catholic Charities

SOCIAL CONCERNS • PARISH SOCIAL MINISTRY

**L.E.G.
Alert**

Legislative Education Group (L.E.G.)

SERVING MARYLAND'S VULNERABLE POPULATIONS FOR OVER 30 YEARS

August 2008

ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Dear L.E.G. Member:

During these last weeks of summer, you can encourage Congress to **do more to strengthen our economy and help our neighbors who are struggling the most.**

The first economic stimulus package this year included tax rebates to low-to-middle income people, extended unemployment insurance to some, and suspended Medicaid regulations that would have denied benefits to people in need or passed on more costs to states that are struggling with their own budget woes. These steps are positive, but they are not enough.

Before September 26, 2008, Congress will consider a second economic stimulus package. Economists agree that aid to people living on a low-income works most effectively to boost the economy, because someone living paycheck to paycheck is likely to spend any extra dollar to come closer to meeting their basic needs. Therefore, we write asking you to **URGE FEDERAL legislators to enact a second stimulus package that includes:**

- **NUTRITION ASSISTANCE TO COUNTER SKYROCKETING FOOD PRICES AND RISING NEED.** As of June 2008, 366,584 Marylanders were receiving Food Stamps, nearly 61,000 more just two years ago. The cost of bread rose nearly 16% in the last year, while eggs jumped 23%.
- **HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE TO MEET RISING COSTS.** As America faces record high energy prices, Maryland residents are feeling the strain. The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) helps families, seniors on fixed incomes, and people with disabilities pay their energy bills. Without additional LIHEAP funding, many vulnerable Marylanders could face utility shutoffs. Last year, Maryland received over 128,000 applications for energy assistance and 40% of those were NEW applicants. The energy assistance program in Maryland, which relies on LIHEAP funds, ran out of money last fiscal year, so many needy families went without assistance. Additional federal funds through LIHEAP would help keep Marylanders warm and safe this winter and help keep the program going for the whole year.

- **PREVENT REDUCTIONS IN HEAD START.** In the last six years, Head Start funding has declined by 11%, adjusting for inflation, jeopardizing education, nutrition, health, and social services for low-income preschool children and their families. Catholic Charities' own Head Start programs in Baltimore City (St. Jerome's), Carroll County, and Harford County have been forced to reduce staff, eliminate transportation, and cut back the number of weeks during the year that the programs are open. Funding in the second economic stimulus package could reverse a 2008 cut and start moving Head Start toward the funding level approved in the recently enacted Head Start reauthorization.
- **FURTHER IMPROVEMENT OF UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE.** With long-term unemployment on the rise nationwide, and increasing even in Maryland's strong economy, Congress should provide another 13-week extension to unemployment benefits. Making sure that more low-income, jobless workers receive extended benefits will provide economic stimulus through increased consumer spending and help protect individuals from the growing problem of foreclosure and eviction.

A second economic stimulus package is critical, and it must include these four elements if it is going to help those who need it most.

What Can I Do?...Write or Email At Least ONE of Your Elected Officials:

(The below webpages are the officials' email contact webforms or websites. Fill out your information and submit your Alert letter directly onto the form. It is possible to cut and paste your Alert text into the message field on the webform. You can also mail or fax your letter.)



U.S. Senators

Senator Ben Cardin
509 Senate Hart Building
Washington, DC 20510
Fax: 202.224.1651
Webform: www.cardin.senate.gov/contact/email.cfm

Senator Barbara Mikulski
503 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510 — 2003
Fax: 202.224.8858
Webform: www.mikulski.senate.gov/contact/contact.cfm

U.S. Representatives

Rep. Wayne Gilchrest
(1st District: *parts of Anne Arundel, Harford & Baltimore Cntys*)
2245 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
Fax: 202.225.0254
Webform: www.gilchrest.house.gov

Rep. Steny H. Hoyer
(5th District: *parts of Anne Arundel County*)
1705 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
Fax: 202.225.4300
Webform: www.hoyer.house.gov/contact/email.asp

Rep. C.A. "Dutch" Ruppberger
(2nd District: *parts of Baltimore City & parts of Baltimore & Harford Cntys*)
1730 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
Fax: 202.225.3094
Webform: www.dutch.house.gov/writedutch_zs.shtml

Rep. Roscoe G. Bartlett
(6th District: *Western Maryland, Carroll & Frederick, & parts of Baltimore & Harford Cntys*)
2412 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
Fax: 202.225.2193
Webform: www.bartlett.house.gov/email_Roscoe

Rep. John P. Sarbanes
(3rd District: *parts of Baltimore City, Baltimore, Anne Arundel, & Howard Cntys*)
426 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
Fax: 202.225.9219
Webform: forms.house.gov/sarbanes/forms/issue_subscribe.shtml

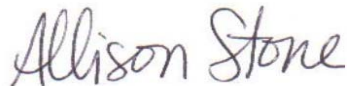
Rep. Elijah E. Cummings
(7th District: *parts of Baltimore City & Baltimore & Howard Cntys*)
2235 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
Fax: 202.225.3178
Webform: www.house.gov/cummings

A "Sample Alert Letter" is enclosed to assist in your letter writing.

When federal legislators return to Washington in September, they will likely have the opportunity to consider another economic stimulus package. Your response **NOW** will help prepare them for that critical decision and could help bring quick relief to Marylanders in need.

Please accept our gratitude for your willingness to add your voice in support of key provisions to help people living on a low income.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Allison Stone".

L.E.G. Coordinator
Parish Social Ministry

*Love for others, and especially for the poor, is made concrete
by promoting justice.*

-The Hundredth Year

[Date]

The Honorable _____
[Number] [Name] [House/Senate] Office Building
Washington, DC [Zip]

RE: Pass Second Economic Stimulus Package for Those Most in Need

Dear _____:

With the economy struggling, many Marylanders are struggling too. I hope you will do your part to help them by supporting a second economic stimulus package that focuses aid to families and individuals living on a low-income.

As [a volunteer, employer, or _____], I know hard-working families and seniors who have worked all their lives are struggling to make ends meet. [*Optional*: I am especially concerned about (insert appropriate example).]

The second economic stimulus package should include provisions that will make a difference to those struggling the most:

1. **INCREASED FOOD AND NUTRITION AID, SUCH AS FOOD STAMPS.**
2. **INCREASED HOME ENERGY AID, THROUGH THE LOW-INCOME HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (LIHEAP).**
3. **REVERSING 2008 CUTS AND PREVENTING FUTURE CUTS TO HEAD START.**
4. **EXTENDING AND STRENGTHENING UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE.**

I urge you and your colleagues to pass a second economic stimulus package that includes funding for food and energy assistance, Head Start, and unemployment insurance expansion.

Thank you for considering my views.

Sincerely,

Name
Address