



Catholic Charities

SOCIAL CONCERNS • PARISH SOCIAL MINISTRY

**L.E.G.
Alert**

Legislative Education Group (L.E.G.)
SERVING MARYLAND'S VULNERABLE POPULATIONS FOR OVER 32 YEARS

January 2009

ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND REINVESTMENT

Dear L.E.G. Member:

As we start the New Year and welcome a new Administration, you can encourage Congress to strengthen our economy, by helping our neighbors who are struggling the most.

The 2008 economic stimulus packages included tax rebates for 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. As the country and our state sinks deeper into a recession, more needs to be done to revitalize the economy and support the increasing number of people seeking help.

Congress is now working on another economic stimulus package. Economists agree that aid to people living on a low-income works most efficiently 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 stimulus package that will:

- **Increase Benefits** through **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP – formerly Food Stamps)**. Struggling individuals and families need help with food, as evidenced by growing SNAP rolls in Maryland and much larger demand at local food pantries. SNAP benefits can be delivered quickly, so the economy can benefit from their impact almost immediately. For every SNAP dollar spent, the economy receives a boost of \$1.73.
- **Protect Medicaid and Other Social Service Programs**. During this recession, states are considering cutting social services and/or Medicaid benefits and eligibility at a time when those who rely on these programs need them the most. To keep the safety net strong and provide states an incentive to avoid harmful cuts, Congress can temporarily increase federal matching funds for Medicaid and provide grants to State and local governments for social service programs.
- **Further Improve Unemployment Insurance**. With long-term unemployment on the rise nationwide, and at a 10-year high 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. Congress should also increase the weekly unemployment insurance checks to help with the rising costs of food, housing, fuel, and other basic need items.
- **Provide Additional Funding for the Emergency Food Shelter Program (EFSP)**. EFSP was created during the deep recession of 1983 with \$50 million in federal funds to help address the crisis of hunger and homelessness in local communities. Over the last 25 years, EFSP has distributed more than \$3 billion to over 12,000 local providers. EFSP has a fast response, gets resources to the neediest areas, includes public/private partnerships at the local level, and has an established data collection and reporting system to ensure accountability.

Another 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. Frank M. Kratovil, Jr.
(1st District: *parts of Anne Arundel, Harford & Baltimore Cntys*)
314 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
Fax: 202.225.0254
Webform:
www.kratovil.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, Anne Arundel & Harford Cntys*)
1730 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
Fax: 202.225.3094
Webform:
www.dutch.house.gov/writedutch_za.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:
<http://sarbanes.house.gov/federal.asp>

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.

With a new Administration prepared to deal with the current economic crisis head-on, federal legislators will have the opportunity to consider another economic stimulus package in February.

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,



Sr. Joan Marie Stief
L.E.G. Coordinator
Parish Social Ministry

The obligation to provide justice for all means that the poor have the single most urgent economic claim on the conscience of the nation.

-Economic Justice for All

SAMPLE "ALERT" LETTER

[Date]

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

RE: *Pass 2009 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 an economic recovery and reinvestment 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. INCREASE BENEFITS through SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
2. PROTECT MEDICAID and OTHER SOCIAL SERVICE PROGRAMS
3. FURTHER IMPROVE UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE
4. PROVIDE ADDITIONAL FUNDING for the EMERGENCY FOOD SHELTER PROGRAM (EFSP)

I urge you and your colleagues to **PASS** an economic recovery and reinvestment package that includes funding for Medicaid costs, other critical social service programs, SNAP benefits, EFSP, and unemployment insurance expansion. Providing assistance to those in need will provide much needed relief and help boost the economy.

Thank you for considering my views.

Sincerely,

Name
Address
