

## **Summary of Your Domestic and International Advocacy Efforts—August 2010**

### **Domestic Updates**

**Unemployment Assistance:** In July, we asked you to urge your Senators to [extend unemployment insurance](#) benefits for laid-off workers through November 2010. On July 21, the Senate voted 59-39 to do just that, providing Extended Unemployment benefits to millions of people who are without work and granting back payments to about 2.5 million people who have been out of work for six months or more and have seen their jobless benefits lapse. The House passed the bill (HR 4213) quickly thereafter and the President signed it into law on July 22, 2010. Thank you for your hard work! You are making a difference!

**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 of these provisions are part of the broader tax legislation passed in 2001 and 2003 (known as the “Bush Tax Cuts”) that will expire on Dec. 31 if Congress does nothing. Although no legislation has been introduced, there is much debate about the pros and cons of extending the tax cuts. The EITC and CTC help low-income and middle-income families trying to pay their mortgage, catching up on payments after a job loss, or paying for school clothes. Please continue to urge Congress to extend these credits regardless of whether or not they extend other tax cuts.

**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. You can continue to urge Congress to include funding for the Housing Trust Fund in economic recovery or jobs legislation when it returns from recess.

**Child Nutrition:** United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholic Charities USA, National Catholic Rural Life Conference, and National Catholic Educational Association have jointly written Congress urging the reauthorization of the [Child Nutrition Act](#), which includes the School-Lunch, School-Breakfast, the Summer Feeding Program, and the Women, Infants and Children Program (WIC). In the past academic year, 3,680 Catholic schools nationwide participated in these programs, which improve children’s access to the nutritious food they need. Although the programs are not controversial, there is no agreement in the House and Senate on how to pay for improvements to the programs. The Senate passed a version of Child Nutrition Reauthorization that reduces SNAP benefits (food stamps) to pay for other provisions in the bill. The House has yet to act on its version of the bill. Passage of a Child Nutrition Reauthorization bill this year will ensure significant movement towards the goals of ending child hunger by 2015 and dramatically reducing childhood obesity.

**Climate Change:** We asked you to [urge key senators](#) to include and strengthen provisions in climate legislation that would protect poor and vulnerable people, in our country and around the world, from the impacts of climate change and the effects of policies needed to address it. Unfortunately, the Senate will not consider climate legislation this year. When Congress takes up this important legislation in the future we will call on you again to urge your members to strengthen these protections. In the meantime, we will continue to engage the Administration and members of Congress about the bishops’ priorities and to educate Catholics about this important issue.

## International Updates

**Nuclear Weapons:** We asked those of you whose Senator is a member of the Committee on Foreign Relations to urge them to support the [New START Treaty](#), which reduces U.S. and Russian nuclear weapons and implements new verification requirements. The Committee is expected to take up action after the August recess (the week of Sept. 15). Please continue to urge your senators to support the New START Treaty when it comes to the Senate floor in the fall.

**Violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC):** Due to your successful [advocacy efforts](#), provisions are now included in the financial reform bill requiring large U.S. companies to take steps, including regular audits, to ensure that the minerals used in their products are not financing militia violence in the eastern Congo. The bill also allows companies to label goods as “conflict mineral-free” and directs the U.S. government to develop a strategy that addresses the links among human rights abuses and illegal extraction of minerals from the Congo. Thanks to your advocacy efforts, the prayers of the Church and people in DRC have been answered.

**Accountability and Extractive Industries:** Thanks to your efforts, the financial reform legislation also now includes a provision requiring large U.S. companies that extract minerals, oil, and gas to publish what they pay to the governments of the countries in which they work. This requirement will make it easier for civil society in those countries to hold their governments accountable for how these revenues are used. Thanks to your successful advocacy efforts, poor and vulnerable people throughout the world will benefit.

**Haiti:** We asked you to urge Congress to provide much-needed emergency relief and funds for long-term reconstruction in Haiti. Congress passed the Haiti Economic Lift Program ([HELP, S. 3275](#) and [H.R. 5160](#)) and the Debt Relief for Earthquake Recovery Act for Haiti (H.R. 4573 and S. 2961) and both pieces of legislation were signed by the President. These are huge victories that will help Haiti to recover and rebuild. We are deeply thankful for your support of Haiti as it struggles to recover from the devastating earthquake.

**FY 2010 Supplemental Budget Request:** Thanks in part to your advocacy around the [Emergency Supplemental](#), Congress approved \$ 2.8 billion for Haiti (our ask was \$2.5 billion), of which \$1.23 billion went to relief and reconstruction, \$943 to debt relief, and \$150 million to food assistance. Of the \$1.597 billion we requested for global emergency needs, Congress approved \$165 million for migration and refugee assistance and \$460 million for International Disaster Assistance. Although the amounts allocated for global emergency needs did not reach the levels CRS and USCCB had requested, in these difficult economic times, the additional funds are welcome and will save lives and help protect human dignity.

**Land Mines:** We asked you to let President Obama and your Senators know that you support a comprehensive review of U.S. landmine policy so that the U.S. can join the [Mine Ban Treaty](#). While that review is in process, you can still voice your support for the Mine Ban Treaty.

**Peace in the Holy Land:** We continue to urge strong U.S. leadership for a two-state solution to the [Israeli-Palestinian conflict](#)—a secure and recognized Israel living alongside an independent and viable Palestinian state. In addition to your grassroots advocacy, Christian leaders, including Bishop Dennis Madden, have met with a high ranking Administration official to urge action for a just peace.

**Sudan:** We asked you to urge President Obama to do everything he can to support full implementation of the [Comprehensive Peace Agreement](#) and other efforts to promote peace and stability in Sudan. Thanks to your efforts and the recent visit by Bishop Daniel Adwok and Bishop Rudolf Deng of Sudan to meet with key Administration officials and a number of members of Congress, Sudan is getting more attention. A number of members of Congress are now contacting the Administration about this issue. In addition, Special U.S. Envoy Scott Gration met with the Sudan Council of Churches (SCC), of which the Catholic Church is a member, to listen to their concerns.

**Reduce Nuclear Weapons and Enhance Child Survival:** We urged members of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs to support the [Global Security Priorities Resolution](#) (H.Res. 278) which would use savings from nuclear weapons reductions to secure nuclear materials from terrorists and to support child survival programs in developing nations, a real “swords into plowshares” initiative. The Committee has not yet acted. If your representative is a member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, please [continue to express your support](#) for this Resolution.

You can find out if your Congresspersons 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 August 9 – September 12 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.

Thank you for your continued advocacy in support of human life and dignity!

Sincerely,  
Kathy Saile, Director, Office of Domestic Social Development  
Steve Colecchi, Director, Office of International Justice and Peace  
Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development  
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops