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Community, Religious, Service Organizations: Congress Should Stand With NY Families, Not Bush

**As the House Takes Up Appropriations Bill, Organizations Write Congress:
Don't Cut Vital Services to Families in Need**

Representatives Kuhl, King, and Reynolds Support Bush Veto of Modest Funding Increases

Albany – As Congress prepared to take up the Labor, Health and Human Services appropriations bill this week, representatives of more than 30 organizations jointly wrote the New York Congressional delegation today to urge them not to support President's Bush's threatened veto of any appropriations bill that increases domestic spending. The advocates, from children's, hunger, religious, social service and other advocacy organizations, also called upon New York representatives Peter King (R-3rd C.D.), John R. "Randy" Kuhl, Jr. (R-29th C.D.), and Thomas Reynolds (R-26th C.D.) to remove their names from a letter promising to sustain a Presidential veto of these bills, and to each make a statement in support of modest increases in critical human needs like health care and education.

This week, the House of Representatives is expected to take up the Labor, Health, and Human Services and Education appropriations bill for 2008. The advocates say this gives Representatives King, Kuhl, and Reynolds a clear choice: cave to political pressure from the White House, or stand up for low and moderate income families in New York State.

"New York's Congressional representatives need to decide whether to stand with New York families that are struggling to pay high heating bills, to put food on the table and to educate their children, or with special interests seeking tax breaks from Congress," said Bob Cohen, Policy Director of Citizen Action of New York, and a New York representative of the Emergency Campaign for America's Priorities (ECAP), a national budget coalition. "The Bush budget is unacceptable, and we've got to ensure that the final budget meets basic human needs."

The Congress passed a budget resolution in May that begins to reverse six years of misguided priorities in previous Republican budgets by increasing domestic spending 1.4 percent over inflation, but the White House has threatened to veto any domestic spending above the President's requested levels, claiming that these increases would be too expensive. However, according to a new analysis by the Fiscal

Policy Institute, the Bush budget would punish many critical programs, for example, eliminating funding for community service block grants in 2008, cutting low-income emergency assistance by 19 percent, and cutting vocational and adult education by 41 percent.

“President Bush has threatened to use his veto power to subvert the needs and the will of Americans, only to stubbornly stay the course on dangerous budget cuts that will affect millions of American families,” said Trudi Renwick, senior economist at the Fiscal Policy Institute, another organization that signed the New York letter to Congress. “Every year, the budgets of working- and middle-class Americans are squeezed more as the costs of health care, education and other critical needs soar but incomes remain largely stagnant. The Bush tax cuts have overwhelmingly benefited the wealthy few. For the cost of tax cuts for millionaires, we could protect critical services.”

“Representatives Kuhl, King and Walsh should show leadership and stand up for the people of New York, but instead they have chosen to fall in line with the Republican leadership and support corporate special interests over the needs of average New Yorkers,” said Richard Kirsch, Executive Director of Citizen Action of New York. “After six years of irresponsible tax cuts that favor the wealthy, Congress has finally passed a budget that reflects the values and priorities of ordinary Americans. But that’s not enough. We need members of Congress from both parties to have the courage to stand up to the threat of a presidential veto.”

Both the full list of organizational signers and a summary of the FPI analysis are below. The text of the letter is available at www.fiscalpolicy.org and www.citizenactionny.org.

The Fiscal Policy Institute (www.fiscalpolicy.org) is a nonpartisan research and education organization that focuses on tax, budget, and economic issues that affect the quality of life and the economic well being of New York State residents.

Citizen Action of New York (www.citizenactionny.org) is a statewide membership organization working for social, racial, economic and environmental justice.

Both FPI and Citizen Action are affiliated with the Emergency Campaign for America’s Priorities (www.actnow.org), a nationwide campaign of national and grassroots organizations committed to reversing the administration’s policy of drastic cuts to programs that primarily benefit the poor and middle class in order to finance tax cuts that benefit the wealthy and special interests.

Signatories to Letter to the New York State Congressional Delegation

Charles Kalthoff, Executive Director
ACCORD Corporation, Allegany County

Billy Easton, Executive Director
Alliance for Quality Education*

Karen Scharff, Executive Director
Citizen Action of New York,
Public Policy and Education Fund

Beth Shavalier
Chemung County Child Care Council

Bob Cohen, Director
Coalition for After-School Funding

Sally Allison, Chairperson, Justice Ministry
Downtown United Presbyterian Church

Myrna F. Young, Executive Director, CEO
Everywoman Opportunity Center, Inc.

Paige Pierce, Executive Director
Families Together in New York State

Carol Blowers
Family Planning Advocates of New York State

Frank Mauro, Executive Director
Fiscal Policy Institute

Ruth Freeman, Director, Early Childhood Program
HELP Morris Early Childhood Program

Bich Ha Pham, Executive Director
Hunger Action Network of New York State

Ed Bloch
Interfaith Alliance of New York State

Calvin Twoguns, CEO
Matthew J. Kaye, Executive Director
Liberty Research Group
(HIV/AIDS Advocates and Consultants)

Alissa Venturini, Program Coordinator
Matt Urban Human Services Center of WNY*

Jon Greenbaum, Organizer
Metro Justice

Terry Scofield
NY Universal Living Wage Warriors

Italia T. Rutther, Ph.D., Director
New York City Emergency Food and Shelter Program

Carol J. Saginaw, Executive Director
New York State Child Care Coordinating Council

Denise Harlow, CEO
New York State Community Action Organization

Carole Oshinsky and Susan Chinitz, Co-Presidents
New York Zero-to-Three Network

Ron Deutch, Executive Director
New Yorkers for Fiscal Fairness

Linda Bopp, Executive Director
Nutrition Consortium of New York State

Lura L. Lunkenheimer, President
Peaceful Resolutions for Living*

Karen Schimke, President and CEO
Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy, Inc.

Debra MacDonald
Schuyler County Child Care Coordinating Council,
Inc.

Sr. Claire Regan, Justice Effectiveness Coordinator
Sisters of Charity of New York*

Sr. Barbara Lenniger
Thorpe Family Residence, Inc.

Rebecca Ahouse
Coordinator of Youth Development Services
Wayne Finger Lakes BOCES/United Way of Seneca
County

Doreen Wohl, Executive Director
West Side Campaign Against Hunger

Ruth E. Acker, President
Women's City Club of New York

*Organization listed for identification purposes only.

Examples of New York Impact of Budget Cuts Proposed by President Bush

Cut in FY 2008 Relative to FY 2007

	<u>\$\$ in Millions</u> <u>Cut in New York</u>	<u>National</u> <u>Percentage Cut</u>
Community Services Block Grant	\$55.4	100.0%
State and Local Law Enforcement Formula Grants	\$85.6	100.0%
Vocational and Adult Education	\$40.8	41.0%
Social Services Block Grant	\$32.8	29.4%
EPA Clean Water/Drinking Water State Revolving Funds	\$48.6	21.9%
Community Development Block Grant	\$71.5	21.3%
Low-Income Energy Assistance	\$49.4	19.1%
Public Housing Capital Fund	\$78.0	18.6%
Head Start	\$14.7	3.3%
Child Care and Development Block Grant	\$2.0	1.9%

Source: Fiscal Policy Institute analysis of data from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.