



December 4, 2017

To Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell:

The U.S. Senate and House have passed tax legislation that, if given final approval, would amount to one of the most immoral laws in our nation's history.

As this legislation heads to a final vote in Congress, the country's poor and disenfranchised, along with moral leaders and people of conscience nationwide, call on you to stop the gross act of violence these bills would commit against our nation's most vulnerable to serve its richest and most powerful.

You and your colleagues in the Senate approved this legislation under the cover of night, voting in the final hours to reward some of the country's most powerful corporations and industries. The poor, working poor and most vulnerable in our society will pay for the billions in tax breaks you approved for the most wealthy among us.

The Congressional Joint Committee on Taxation has found that while big corporations, millionaires and their heirs will benefit, most people making under \$75,000 a year will see their tax burdens rise. Meanwhile, this legislation will add \$1.4 trillion to the national debt, setting the stage for future cuts to programs that help the poor. In the short term, we could see automatic cuts to Medicare and Medicaid. In the long term, this tax plan lays the groundwork for massive cuts to Social Security and other programs that sustain the poor, the elderly, and the most vulnerable among us.

This is not blind speculation. We have watched the agenda you are now pushing in Congress play out in statehouses from Kansas to North Carolina to Michigan and Wisconsin.

The voice of the prophet Isaiah speaks to each of us in this democracy:

Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people, making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless. (Isaiah 10:1-4)

You and many of your colleagues say you are Christians and that you let your religion guide your policymaking. You even say you are "pro-life." But your actions are stripping people of the healthcare they need to survive. You are working to pass legislation that is antithetical to the more than 2,000 verses that call on all of us to care for the poor and the sick.

You assert that this tax scheme will grow the economy, thus helping everyone. But no independent analysis agrees. Mr. Majority Leader, you are acting on faith, in spite of the evidence. We are writing to inform you that your faith is not in line with the Scriptures, nor with what your party's first President called "the better angels of our nature."

This country's most vulnerable will not remain silent as this immoral legislation moves through Congress. Tens of thousands of poor and disenfranchised people, clergy and moral leaders today announced that we are coming together to launch the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival. We will combine direct action with grassroots organizing, voter registration, and power building in the largest wave of nonviolent civil disobedience in U.S. history. Fifty years to the day after Dr. Martin Luther King and others called for the original Poor People's Campaign, this legislation you are championing makes clear that we need this work now more than ever.

You do not have to move forward with this legislative violence. No opinion poll says that the American people are with you. The Scriptures and the Constitution itself condemn it. Whatever has convinced you that this is the right thing to do, you can live without. But people will die because of this attack on our people.

Today, we are serving notice that we will not remain silent while the basic institutions of our democracy are undermined. We invite you to join people of conscience across the country in rejecting the war on the poor that this tax legislation would wage. But even if you will not, we vow to move forward with a campaign to reconstruct America. Our nation's soul is at stake. We cannot turn back—not now, not ever.

Respectfully,

Rev. Dr. William Barber II and Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis, Co-Chairs of the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival

Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival Steering Committee Members:

Aaron Scott, Chaplains on the Harbor

Al McSurely, Esq., North Carolina NAACP

Avery Brook, Vermont Workers' Center

Catherine Flowers, Alabama Center for Rural Enterprise

Fernando Garcia, Border Network for Human Rights

Justin Jones, Moral Mondays Tennessee

Luis Rodriguez, Tia Chucha's Centro Cultural

Shailly Gupta Barnes, Esq., Kairos Center for Religions, Rights and Social Justice at Union Theological Seminary

Ben Wilkins, Fight for \$15

Rev. Claudia de la Cruz, Popular Education Project

Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, Red Letter Christians

Cherri Foytlin, Bold Louisiana

Rev. Dr. James Forbes, Drum Major Institute, Riverside Church of New York

Rev. Dr. Traci Blackmon, The United Church of Christ

Rev. Nelson Johnson, Faith Community Church

Rabbi Sharon Brous, IKAR

Rev. Shawna Foster, Two Rivers Unitarian Universalist Church

Sister Simone Campbell, NETWORK

Maureen Taylor, Michigan Welfare Rights Organization

Roz Pelles, Repairers of the Breach

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Gina Belafonte, Sankofa.org