September 27, 2013

Dear Senator/Representative:

As leaders of faith communities and organizations comprising millions of people from all walks of life across our nation, we are deeply concerned by the completely avoidable budget and financial crises we are fast approaching as a nation.

Though Congress must pass the federal budget, it belongs to every American. This common fund formed of our combined tax revenues is designed to support the shared infrastructure, well-being, and long-term ethical values of our society. As people of faith we find it morally irresponsible to blockade the process by which we provide for our nation's shared needs in a bid to force *any* individual legislative priority.

It would likewise be reckless to propel the United States into financial default by refusing to raise the debt ceiling for spending that Congress has already approved. Shuttering the federal government or defaulting on the nation's financial commitments is likely to reverse our fragile economic recovery, punish the middle class, and deeply harm our most vulnerable neighbors.

Our democracy rests on principles of reason, compromise, and a commitment to the common good. To hold our governance processes and financial credibility hostage to narrow priorities is not only dangerous to the nation's near-term financial well-being, it threatens the very foundations of our democratic process and our capacity to live united in community.

We ask that lawmakers address their concerns through the proper legislative channels. It ill serves our nation and people to stand in the way of funding federal operations or raising the debt ceiling in an effort to block implementation of health care legislationthat Congress duly enacted. We ask that congressional leadership of both parties stand strong in opposing efforts to allow the will of the few to threaten the common good.

We commit to keeping you in prayer, asking that God continue to give you wisdom as you faithfully serve our nation during this time when the country most needs your principled leadership.

Sincerely,

Ruth Messinger
President
American Jewish World Service

Rev. David Beckmann
President
Bread for the World

Dr. Lester A. Myers
President
Center of Concern

Dr. Sharon Watkins
General Minister and President
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Rev. John L. McCullough
President and CEO
Church World Service

Dr. Jack Sullivan
President
Disciples Justice Action Network

The Most Reverend Katharine Jefferts Schori
Presiding Bishop and Primate
The Episcopal Church

The Rev. Mark S. Hanson
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Rev. Linda Hanna Walling
Executive Director
Faithful Reform in Health Care

Diane Randall
Executive Secretary
Friends Committee on National Legislation

Dr. Sayyid Syeed
National Director
Islamic Society of North America

Sr. Janet Mock, CSJ
Executive Director
Leadership Conference of Women Religious

Salam Al-Marayati
President
Muslim Public Affairs Council

Jack Payden-Travers
Director
National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund

Nancy Kaufman
Chief Executive Officer
National Council of Jewish Women

Sr. Patricia Chappell
Executive Director
Pax Christi USA

Rev. Kip B. Banks
Interim General Secretary
Progressive National Baptist Convention

Sr. Patricia McDermott, RSM
President of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas

Rev. Peter Morales
President
Unitarian Universalist Association

Rev. Geoffrey Black, General Minister and President and
Rev. M. Linda Jaramillo
Executive Minister, Justice and Witness Ministries
United Church of Christ

Sr. Margaret Magee, OSF
President
Franciscan Action Network

Rev. Dr. C. Welton Gaddy
President
Interfaith Alliance

Rabbi Steve Gutow
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Peg Birk
Transitional General Secretary
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Executive Director
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby

Rev. Gradye Parsons
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Director
Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism

Rev. Jim Wallis
President
Sojourners

Rev. Dr. William F. Schulz
President
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

Bishop Peter D. Weaver
Executive Secretary, The Council of Bishops
The United Methodist Church