



Resolutions To Action

LCWR Global Concerns Committee

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2008 Elections: From 'YOYO' to 'WITT' Economics

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EXPERIENCE

Domestic economic justice is essentially a vision and a mission for all people of good will who are concerned for the common good.

Our experience reflects the reality that there is widespread economic insecurity in the United States. Even in the campaign debates, little energy or critical analysis is given to determining and addressing the root causes of our domestic economic disarray.

In the US Constitution, we set forth the responsibility of the government to "promote the general welfare," not just "provide for the common defense." However, the option of splitting the difference between funding levels in the President's budget request and what Congress passed was flatly refused by the Administration. The impact of an omnibus based on the President's proposed budget will be: families eliminated from the WIC program (even as waiting lists grow), more Section 8 housing vouchers lost, more children in unsafe situations as parents are denied child care assistance for appropriate child

care, support services denied to special needs children, and continued danger to the resources of our planet.

SOCIAL ANALYSIS

Non-profits, faith-based groups, private and public sector need to work and lobby together to create a more just and equitable economy. We must seek the root causes of the economic and social problems and move to enact policies that will have long-term impact on creating a new and sustainable reality.

Catholic Social Tradition maintains that civil authority ultimately exists to achieve the common good (*Gaudium et Spes*, #26 and *Pacem in Terris*, #11). When the public sector fails or is unable to meet the human needs of people, then people must work through the government to meet them. The degree to which a government accepts this responsibility becomes the litmus test for what constitutes a good society. We need to focus our political will to make domestic economic justice a priority.

In *All Together Now*, Jared Bernstein promotes the urgency to shift from YOYO (you're-on-your-own) economics to WITT (we-are-in-this-together) economics.

A significant segment of the American population, including members of Congress and the President, support and defend the YOYO, radical individualistic approach. By not favoring government intervention, the market is allowed to operate virtually without restraint. This approach endorses the market's ability to maximize growth and accepts economic inequalities as a situation created by unfortunate choices and not a result of unfair policies.

The YOYO approach undermines Catholic Social Tradition (CST). The value and strengths of a free market are recognized by CST but it also recognizes the limitations of the market. The economic hardships endured by many

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over the last years reflect the impact of the YOYO approach.

WITT is not free of costs, limits, and potential flaws, but it seeks the best of both the free market and good government involvement for all and by all.

REFLECTION

In *Economic Justice for All*, the bishops' clearly state: "Decisions must be judged in light of what they do for the poor, what they do to the poor, and what they enable the poor to do for themselves. The fundamental moral criterion for all economic decisions, policies, and institutions is this: They must be at the service of all people, especially the poor." #24

Are we actively involved in clearly defining and articulating what constitutes a new direction that serves the common good? Can we articulate the criterion by which we can constantly measure its validity? Finally, will we who define authentic politics as a ministry of justice have the courage to maintain oversight of our political leaders and hold them responsible for the implementation of this new direction?

Our Scriptures abound with stories where the purpose of the message is to "afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted." We cannot afford to be complacent; our complicity is of moral concern.

Virtues of democracy, freedom, solidarity, and love require that we encounter one another as sister and brother — as one with one another and the universe. We need to understand justice spirituality as being in right relationships as members of a global community and the universe. We must right the ecological dilemma which our current national leadership fails to acknowledge or address. Then, perhaps it will be said of us: "...See how they love one another."

ACTION

By this time next year, we will have elected a new President as well as some new members to Congress. So, as we enter more deeply into this election year, we need to take the needed time to educate, lobby, and advocate for domestic economic justice and enter into the process of formulating a new vision for this nation based on the principle of the common good.

In 2004, only 55% of eligible voters responsibly exercised their right to vote. As faithful disciples and responsible citizens, we are challenged to exercise our political responsibilities and encourage others to do so, too. For the sake of our

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"living democracy" and our credible witness as a nation, we must voice our values with a vote and then work with the new leadership to achieve a just and equitable society.

Therefore, it is imperative that we select political leaders who will:

- Support the creation of jobs offering a living wage
- Invest in education and skill training
- Ensure universal access to affordable health care
- Provide adequate child-care assistance
- Improve Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Earned Income Tax Credits (EITC)

- Address the growing wealth disparity
- Support progressive tax policies for those in the top % of income
- Endorse affordable housing initiatives
- Recognize our global citizenship
- Address the root causes of immigration issues
- Sustain pressure to sign trade agreements that respect the environment and promote mutual development of both parties to the agreement

A few other possibilities are:

- Volunteer with the Election Commission as a poll watcher, driver or registration table assistant
- Host a voter registration fair
- Participate in a caucus, town hall meeting or other legislative action,
- Write an Op-Ed or letter to the Editor
- Re-read the 10th Anniversary Edition of *Economic Justice For All*, and/or *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility from the USCCB*
- Sponsor a book club to discuss *All Together Now* by Jared Bernstein; *The End of Poverty* by Jeffery Sachs; *Living Democracy* by Frances Moore Lappe or a book of your choosing on economic justice and the state of democracy in the United States.
- Visit a new web site or a favorite one for resources:
 - www.usccb.org/cchd/povertyusa; and all related sites;
 - www.catholiccharitiesUSA.org;
 - www.americanprogress.org
 - www.networklobby.org
 - www.educationforjustice.org
 - www.bread.org/; Bread for the World
 - www.cbpp.org; Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
 - www.epinet.org; Economic Policy Institute