

## Pass a Faithful and Compassionate Federal Budget

Congress has until March 23 to pass an appropriations bill to fund the government and avoid a shutdown. Over the past several months, the federal government has been operating on short-term spending bills based on Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 funding levels, which generally underfunds most programs. However, as a result of a recent budget agreement, Congress may soon pass an omnibus bill that would fund the government through the current fiscal year, which ends on September 30, 2018. This is a positive development, and we applaud Congress for this step forward.

As a reflection of our values, we believe the FY19 budget should provide equitable opportunity and uplift the needs of our national's most vulnerable. It is critical that Congress maintain adequate funding for anti-poverty programs, such as Medicaid and nutrition and housing assistance; the Census Bureau; humanitarian aid and foreign assistance; environmental protection; and refugee resettlement. We can no longer afford stop-gap measures that short change these critical programs.

### Protect the Most Vulnerable

- **All Americans deserve the security of being able to sustain basic living standards.** Vital social safety net programs, such as Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, federal nutrition assistance programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), unemployment insurance, and refundable tax credits for low-income people, should be protected and improved. Cutting Social Security by slashing Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income would be devastating for people with disabilities and seniors. The Jewish community has a strong commitment to protecting the most vulnerable among us by fully funding social programs as part of our overall commitment and strategy to reduce poverty.
- **We believe feeding America's hungry is not a political decision, but a moral one.** Food insecurity is one of the most acute hardships many Americans, including children, face across the country. Slashing federal nutrition assistance would leave millions of people, including children, seniors, people with disabilities, and jobless individuals unable to purchase adequate and nutritious food.
- **Every American, regardless of income, is entitled to a safe, affordable home, and the federal government bears primary responsibility, working with state and local governments, to ensure housing is available to all who need it.** Attempts to shift responsibility for social service funding either to the private sector or to the states through block grants and funding cuts place an unacceptable burden on many states already facing fiscal crisis.
- **The federal government must ensure that all communities have equal access to environmental clean-up programs and equal protection from environmental hazards, regardless of income, race, or ethnicity.** All people have the right to live and work in environments with clean air, land, water, and food. Significant cuts to the Environmental Protection Agency would deeply impact the agency's ability to protect public health, including by monitoring the safety of drinking water systems.

## **Uphold Civil Rights and Ensure a Fair and Accurate Census**

- **Congress must maintain offices and programs across government agencies that are dedicated to combating discrimination in policing, housing, employment, education, and other areas based on race, gender, religion, and national origin.** Eliminating or defunding these critical initiatives could set back key civil rights gains for decades.
- **Congress must ensure a sufficient *funding ramp-up* for the 2020 Census to ensure a successful count—one that counts all communities equally well.** Census data are used for everything from allocating federal funding to determining congressional representation. Underfunding our nation’s largest peacetime undertaking could greatly diminish our ability to even reduce the severe undercounting of “hard-to-count” populations like low-income and Limited English Proficient households, people of color, and young children. Adding a citizenship question would also adversely affect response rates, especially among these marginalized populations. If the census is not fair and accurate, the American public will be robbed of representation and needed resources for years to come.

## **Provide International Humanitarian Aid and Refugee Assistance**

- **Congress must maintain international programs that focus on helping developing nations secure basic human rights for their people, including access to education and the elimination of hunger, particularly among children.** In the face of an unprecedented refugee crisis and growing famine in East Africa, it is essential that we fully fund refugee resettlement and humanitarian assistance programs.

## **Combat International Climate Change**

- **Congress must ensure that programs that promote renewable energy and combat climate change have the resources to continue this important work.** Climate change is an international security threat and one of the greatest moral issues of our time. We opposing eliminating or defunding the Global Climate Change Initiative and other State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development programs related to climate change.

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*The Jewish Council for Public Affairs (JCPA) is the hub of the Jewish community relations network, representing over 125 local Jewish community relations councils and 16 national Jewish agencies. Together our network builds consensus on behalf of the entire Jewish community to promote a just and pluralistic American society, advocate for human rights around the world, and support Israel's quest for peace and security.*