



Overall Campaign: Questions and Answers

1. Our budget deficits are too severe to spare any program from cuts. And once you exempt one program, then soon everyone will be calling for their program to be off the table. How can we afford to exempt any program—no matter how deserving—from cuts?

Reducing our nation's deficit will require tough decisions, but whether to adequately fund programs for poor and hungry people should not be one of them. We do not need to choose between deficit reduction and ending hunger. Cutting programs vital to hungry and poor people will not reduce the federal deficit. All the major deficit-reduction packages of the last quarter-century protected critical programs for low-income people from cuts and actually reduced poverty.

Legislation in 1990 and 1993 made important expansions to the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), and the 1997 deficit-reduction package created the Children's Health Insurance Program. The major bipartisan commissions and congressional groups that have recommended deficit-reduction proposals in recent years all included protecting poor and vulnerable populations as a fundamental principle. Congress can and should adhere to this principle as well.

2. This Offering of Letters is complicated, with several different issues being worked on almost simultaneously throughout the year. Explain how all this fits together and how the campaign will work.

The overall theme for the 2012 Offering of Letters is "Expanding the Circle of Protection." We are urging Bread members to build on the work they did in 2011 around the circle of protection. Our overall campaign, which runs throughout 2012, focuses on protecting funding for programs for hungry and poor people. You and your church or group can choose to participate in this overall campaign and/or one or more of the mini-campaigns that are described below.

The four mini-campaigns address programs for poor and hungry people that are at serious risk:

- Federal domestic nutrition assistance programs, such as the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps).
- Poverty-focused foreign assistance.
- Tax credits for low-income working families, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit.
- International food aid.

These are all issues Bread has worked on for decades—and they are facing unprecedented threats from budget cuts proposed by Congress. We need to ensure that Congress forms a circle of protection around these programs and funds them. The budget decisions members of Congress make throughout 2012 will have major long-term implications for these programs and for the millions of people in the United States and around the world who benefit from them.

The mini-campaigns provide greater responsiveness and flexibility in approaching the Offering of Letters. Before your church or group chooses its campaign(s), be sure to check www.bread.org/OL for the latest information and resources on the overall campaign and four mini-campaigns—and to see which campaigns are active. The overall campaign will run throughout 2012, but the timing of the four mini-campaigns will depend on how the work of Congress unfolds throughout the year.

As churches and campuses choose which mini-campaign to take up for their letter writing, they can take into account who their members of Congress are, the members' roles in each of the different issues, and what is currently happening in Congress. Churches and others can also do more than one Offering of Letters to respond to particular threats or opportunities in Congress on the different mini-campaign topics.

If your church or group can only do one Offering of Letters for the year and none of the mini-campaign topics appeal to you, feel free to focus on the overall campaign.

