

BREAD FOR THE WORLD'S 2017 OFFERING OF LETTERS
DOING OUR PART TO END
HUNGER

AN INVITATION

Tell Congress to Help End Hunger

Dear Friends,

Every year, Bread for the World invites churches across the country to take up an offering—not of money, but of letters to Congress on an issue that is important to hungry people. During Bread for the World's 2017 Offering of Letters: Doing Our Part to End Hunger, hundreds of thousands of people will urge their members of Congress to make funding decisions that put our country and the world on track to end hunger.

We have made substantial progress against hunger and poverty in recent decades, both worldwide and in the United States. So we know it is possible to further reduce and perhaps virtually end hunger.

Pope Francis, Bill Gates, and the World Bank have each presented convincing evidence that ending hunger and extreme poverty by 2030 is within reach, and most U.S. pastors agree. All the nations of the world have agreed to work for the end of hunger and related goals by 2030.

As Christians reflect on these hopeful developments, we recognize God at work in the world. We are moved by our experience of God's grace in Jesus Christ to do our part to help end hunger—through direct assistance to people in need and as advocates on public policies affecting hungry and struggling people.

With President Donald J. Trump in the White House and the Republican party in control of Congress, our nation's leaders will be making very big changes this year. More major legislation gets passed in the first year of a new presidency than at any other time during a presidential term. So this year is very important.

Powerful forces in Congress will be pushing to dismantle or cut funding for many of the programs that help hungry and struggling people in our country and worldwide. Programs threatened with deep cuts include those that offer direct help to buy food for infants and families in this country—for example, WIC and SNAP (formerly food stamps). Also in peril are international programs, including nutrition assistance for young children and investments that help struggling farmers grow more food and nourish their families and communities.

Government programs cannot by themselves end hunger. Families, churches and charities, and businesses also have to play their parts. But we can only end hunger if our national government does its part. Our powerful government is a vital force for ending hunger here at home and worldwide.

Doing our part as Christians this year includes advocacy with our members of Congress to ensure they make funding decisions that put us on track to ending hunger by 2030.

Grace and peace,



Rev. David Beckmann
President, Bread for the World



Laura Elizabeth Pohl for Bread for the World

A BIBLICAL REFLECTION ON DOING OUR PART TO END HUNGER

Meeting People's Most Basic Need to Be Physically Nourished

The issue of hunger is prevalent in the biblical narrative. The stories of Abraham, Ruth, Elijah, David, and others take place in the context of famine and migration. Lessons throughout the Bible circle back to the importance of meeting people's most basic need to be physically nourished.

Lessons from the Bible also show that when groups of people come together, each person doing his or her part and sharing common resources, all can have enough to eat. In Genesis 41, Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dream to mean that Egypt would see both abundance and famine in the coming years. Putting his faith in God,

Joseph instructs Pharaoh to save grain from years of plenty to feed people in years of famine. Exercising good government, Joseph creates a system where everyone contributes in years of plenty so none go hungry in years of scarcity. Because of good management of shared resources, Egypt not only had enough to meet their needs, but also to feed their neighbors too. Today, God calls on us to exercise good governance and to use our nation's resources so that all have enough to eat.

In the New Testament, common resources are also shared so that all are fed. Matthew 14:13-21 tells the story of Jesus and the feeding of the 5,000. Jesus gathers the resources available (just five loaves and two fish) and the disciples share them with the thousands of people who gathered so that "all ate and were filled" (Matthew 14:20). In the end, there is such an abundance that 12 baskets are full of leftovers.

Just as it did for the first readers of Matthew, the feeding of the 5,000 points us to God's gracious abundance to us in the Lord's Supper or Eucharist. As we are nourished by this spiritual feast, we are called to help feed everyone, even when resources seem scarce.

The early church, which gathered each week to share that Eucharistic meal, feeding those in need was a prominent

activity. In Acts 2, people from many nations gathered together and received the Holy Spirit. The Spirit-inspired community pooled their resources so those who have need would not want for anything. That same Spirit inspires our communities to do our part to end hunger by gathering our resources to ensure that all have what they need.

The Apostle Paul reminds us that, because of Christ's death and resurrection, we are "a new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17). We see the world with new eyes and with hearts filled with God's limitless love.

And so, remembering Joseph in Egypt, Jesus feeding the thousands, the early church in Acts, and Paul's charge to the Corinthians, we are moved to do our part to end hunger by advocating for Congress to make funding decisions that begins to lay the foundation for a world without hunger.

Through the federal budget process, Congress can make funding decisions that put us on track to end hunger and poverty by 2030. The federal budget uses the common resource of the people's taxes to supply the diversity of needs which includes those who are hungry and living in poverty. Federal budget proposals and resolutions can set forth a long-term vision of eliminating hunger and poverty.

These proposals include full employment, job creation, reframing our tax codes, safety-net programs like SNAP, WIC, global nutrition, and international development programs focused on poverty. The federal budget also sets the trend for states and other nations. By working to persuade Congress and the president to fund these measures, we are doing our part to end hunger and realizing God's vision of a world where all people "will hunger no more" (Revelation 7:16).



Joseph Molieri/Bread for the World

Lessons from the Bible show that when groups of people come together all can have enough to eat.

DOING OUR PART TO END HUNGER

An Overview

The United States and the world have made substantial progress toward ending hunger and poverty over the past several decades. Worldwide, extreme poverty—living on less than \$1.90 a day—has been cut in half over the past 30 years. But more work needs to be done. Nearly 800 million people in the world are still hungry. In the United States, 1 in 6 children lives in a family that struggles with hunger.

Nations around the world, including the United States, have agreed to work for an end to hunger and related goals by 2030. And there is growing recognition among faith leaders, nongovernmental organizations, and business leaders that ending hunger and extreme poverty by 2030 is achievable.

Families, churches and community groups, and businesses all need to do their parts to end hunger. It's crucial that our government also does its part.

Through this 2017 Offering of Letters, we urge Congress to make funding decisions that put our country and the world on track to ending hunger by 2030. This will be a challenging year. Programs that help families alleviate hunger and get out of poverty are threatened with deep funding cuts. As in years past, your persistent and faithful advocacy will be important in defending the interests of people who are hungry.

What Our Government Can Do

Through the federal budget process, Congress can make funding decisions that put us on track to end hunger and poverty. Regardless of which political party controls Congress or the White House, our elected leaders must write, pass, and administer our nation's budget. Through the federal budget our government invests in many anti-poverty and anti-hunger programs that help people stay out of poverty and thrive.

In the United States, 1 in 6 children lives in a family that struggles with hunger.

The federal process typically begins in February when the president submits a budget for the coming fiscal year to Congress. Congress then crafts a budget resolution—a framework for what the government should spend and take in. These budget proposals lay out a vision for our nation's future and inform the spending and legislative decisions Congress makes throughout the year. Sometimes it sets the framework for several years.

After Congress concludes its budget debate, the allocation of dollars begins. This is referred to as the appropriations process. Congress must pass spending or appropriations bills to ensure the government remains open. They fund a wide variety of programs, including anti-hunger programs such as WIC, global nutrition, and international poverty-focused development assistance (PFDA). Spending bills become law when they are signed by the president.

This year's Offering of Letters focuses on this core process that decides our nation's funding priorities.



Joseph Molieri/Bread for the World

Families, churches and community groups, and businesses all need to do their parts to end hunger. It's crucial that our government also do its part.

The national funding decisions of 2017 will have far-reaching effects on the lives of people in the United States and around the world who struggle with hunger and poverty.

Two Key Decision Points in the Budget

In 2017, Congress is expected to use two budget tools that could lead to drastic cuts or changes to anti-hunger programs: sequestration and budget reconciliation.

Sequestration. Enacted in 2011, sequestration—automatic budget cuts—imposes tight limits on the government’s discretionary spending, capping funding for programs that need yearly funding, like WIC, humanitarian assistance, and global nutrition.

Budget reconciliation. This is a legislative procedure that enables Congress to make big changes to many policies and programs at the same time. Reconciliation bills have fast-track privileges that allow them to more easily pass through Congress. Many in Congress are pushing to use this year’s reconciliation bills to fundamentally change the structure and funding for Medicaid and SNAP.

A Budget to End Hunger by 2030

A budget is more than a financial document—it is a moral document, too. It is a statement of our nation’s priorities and values. Our federal budget should be measured on how it treats the most vulnerable people among us.

The national funding decisions of 2017 will have far-reaching effects on the lives of people in the United States and around the world who struggle with hunger and poverty. If investments for key programs are cut, millions of families in the United States will struggle with food insecurity and poverty. Their children are less likely to do well in school and in life. Internationally, many more children will lack the nutrition they need to have a fighting chance in life; fragile nations will continue to weaken; and levels of extreme poverty will rise. On the other hand, positive investments and funding decisions could accelerate our

A budget is more than a financial document—it is a moral document, too.

progress against hunger, save lives, release God-given potential, and allow us to reach the 2030 goal.

We don’t know for sure what Congress and the new administration will do in 2017. President Donald J. Trump prides himself on being unpredictable. He has said things both for and against safety-net programs and has promised to assist struggling communities—“the forgotten men and women of our country.”

So doing our part as Christians this year should include advocacy with our members of Congress for funding decisions that reduce and move us toward ending hunger.



Bread for the World photo

What We Want Congress to Do

Congress must pass budget and appropriations bills that put us on track to end hunger by 2030. In 2017 Congress must invest in key programs that have a proven track record and improve the lives of hungry men, women, and children.

Vital policies and safety-net programs—including WIC, global nutrition, SNAP, and refundable tax credits—must be properly funded and protected. Dismantling or cutting funding for such programs by the 115th Congress would take us backward and make the goal of ending hunger by 2030 unlikely.

Through the federal budget our government invests in many anti-poverty and anti-hunger programs that help people stay out of poverty and thrive.



PROGRAMS THAT HELP HUNGRY, STRUGGLING PEOPLE

Our federal government funds and supports many anti-poverty and anti-hunger programs that help people stay out of poverty and thrive. These programs are the lifeline of millions of Americans who would otherwise fall into poverty or, if already in poverty, fall deeper. Other programs help those abroad feed themselves and live healthier and longer lives.

Here are some of the programs we want the 115th Congress to invest in and protect this year:

- **The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**, formerly known as food stamps, provides millions of eligible low-income individuals and families with financial assistance to purchase nutritious food. SNAP alone moved 4.6 million Americans out of poverty in 2015.
- In 2015, more than 8.2 million low-income women and young children received nutritious food and nutrition education through the **Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)** program.
- **Poverty-focused development assistance (PFDA)** programs provide improved nutrition and food security, access to safe water and sanitation, better farming techniques and agricultural productivity, access to education and medicines—and much more. Today, fewer children around the world are dying and more are thriving than ever before as a result of investments in PFDA programs.
- The **earned income tax credit (EITC)** and the **refundable portion of the child tax credit (CTC)** move more people out of poverty in the United States than any other program, aside from Social Security.

Dismantling or cutting funds for these programs would take us backwards in our efforts to end hunger by 2030.

President Donald J. Trump has proposed to invest in infrastructure, make changes to the tax code, and grow the economy. When Congress receives the specifics, we will see if they will help or hurt progress toward ending hunger and poverty. Good, family-supporting jobs and sustainable economic policies could get us to our goals. Depending on the proposals that are introduced in Congress, we will help good things get done or prevent the damage. Go to bread.org/activist to get the most current information about the budget and Bread's other legislative priorities.

DOING OUR PART TO END HUNGER

Questions and Answers

1. When is the best time to write to Congress about hunger and poverty issues?

Personal letters and emails to Congress are always welcome and effective. Congress will be working on budget and spending bills throughout the year. Check our website for updated sample letters reflecting the latest happenings in Washington, D.C., at bread.org/ol. Or you can opt in to receive Fresh Bread (bread.org/freshbread), a weekly email update on legislative hunger and poverty issues, produced only when Congress is in session.



Joseph Molieri/Bread for the World

This will be a challenging year. Programs that help families alleviate hunger and get out of poverty are threatened with deep funding cuts.

Programs to help end hunger by 2030 did not create our country's debt or deficit. International poverty-focused development assistance programs make up less than one half of one percent of our federal budget. Domestic nutrition programs comprise less than 3 percent. Cutting these programs would not significantly reduce our debt, but it would make it much harder to end hunger by 2030.

In the United States, the health-related costs of hunger and food insecurity to our economy are a staggering \$160 billion. Investments today in anti-hunger programs and anti-poverty policies will help curb future costs.

4. Where can I learn more about sequestration and reconciliation?

Bread has produced a series of fact sheets to help explain budget terms and processes such as sequestration, reconciliation, deficits, and spending caps. The latest versions of these fact sheets are available in our resource library at bread.org/resource-library.

2. What's the budget timeline?

Typically, the president submits a budget for the coming fiscal year to Congress in February. The House and Senate Budget Committees begin work on a resolution in March, and the House and Senate Appropriations Committees begin work on spending bills once a resolution is adopted. The House and Senate work throughout the summer and early fall to pass 12 spending bills. If Congress cannot pass the necessary spending bills for the president to sign into law by Sept. 30 (the end of the fiscal year), to keep the government funded, they have to pass a continuing resolution.

This year, we expect Congress' budget to include reconciliation. Reconciliation enables Congress to make sweeping changes to taxes and programs like SNAP (formerly food stamps), Medicaid, and Medicare. Congress will likely consider a reconciliation bill early in the year to repeal the Affordable Care Act and then take up another reconciliation bill in the summer that could include structural changes to SNAP and Medicaid, as well as tax reform—putting refundable tax credits at risk.

3. What about our national debt? Where is the money to support programs for hungry people supposed to come from?

Nearly 800 million people worldwide suffer from hunger, and 159 million children under the age of 5 suffer from malnutrition.

5. What's the difference between mandatory and discretionary spending?

Mandatory and discretionary are two types of spending in the federal budget. Mandatory programs are available to anyone who meets eligibility criteria. These programs are sometimes called entitlements. Mandatory spending includes SNAP and refundable tax credits, as well as Medicaid, Medicare, and Social Security. Discretionary programs are those funded at the discretion of Congress on a yearly basis through the appropriations process. These include WIC and international poverty-focused development assistance, as well as education, housing, and defense spending.

6. What are block grants, and why does Bread oppose making SNAP and other safety-net programs into block grants?

A block grant is a set amount of federal funding allocated to state and local governments. States have great discretion over how to spend the funds. A block grant caps yearly funding and doesn't always grow with the number of people requiring services or inflation. While this limits the budget, this structure also limits a program's ability to respond effectively as SNAP did during the last recession. Block grants are also more vulnerable to funding cuts over time. Turning SNAP or other safety-net programs into a block grant would likely lead to fewer people getting the help they need.

7. Why is it critical that we do not cut funding for international hunger and nutrition programs?

Nearly 800 million people worldwide suffer from hunger and 159 million children under the age of 5 are malnourished. Initiatives led by the United States such as Feed the Future and the McGovern-Dole School Feeding Program are paving the way for the world to end extreme poverty and hunger by 2030. Since 1990, hunger and extreme poverty rates have been cut in half worldwide. Stunting rates of children under the age of 5 have also fallen from 39.6 percent to 23.2 percent in 2015. U.S. leadership has contributed to this dramatic progress even though we spend less than 1 cent for every dollar on poverty-focused development assistance. Cuts to these vital international hunger and nutrition programs would roll back this progress and make it harder to end hunger by 2030.

Initiatives led by the United States such as Feed the Future and the McGovern-Dole School Feeding Program are paving the way for the world to end extreme poverty and hunger by 2030.



Regardless of which political party controls Congress or the White House, our elected leaders must write, pass, and administer our nation's budget.

REAL-LIFE STORIES ON HOW THE FEDERAL BUDGET AFFECTS PEOPLE

Grateful for Assistance, but Worried About the Future

Dawn Pierce, a vocal advocate against hunger and poverty, spends her workdays as a licensed practical nurse taking care of senior citizens at several small assisted living facilities in Boise, Idaho.

She cares for roughly 70 residents across seven homes, providing wound care, creating care plans, documenting charts, drawing blood, and giving injections. She takes great pride in her job.

Pierce is the mother of three adult children and has recently remarried. She is also a newly elected member of the board of directors of Bread for the World and Bread for the World Institute.

Life is good now, but that wasn't always the case.

In 2010, Pierce lost her job as a paralegal. She began to collect unemployment benefits as she searched for a job. However, the checks were not enough to support her family, and her job search was yielding nothing.

So she made the choice to apply for SNAP benefits, known more commonly as food stamps. The decision was difficult for Pierce.

"I sat in the car for an hour before going in [to the assistance office]," says Pierce. "This wasn't me. I was supposed to be better than this. Hunger was never part of my thinking. I couldn't believe this was happening to me."

But it did happen and our nation's food assistance program helped Pierce, who was a single mother raising a teenage son at the time. The SNAP benefits allowed her to buy groceries and feed herself and her son while she continued to look for permanent work.

The federal budget funds numerous anti-poverty programs such as SNAP. Other vital programs include the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and child nutrition programs.

These programs are a lifeline to millions of Americans every year. Without them, more families would find themselves living in poverty. How the federal government decides to spend taxpayer money has real-life consequences.

SNAP reached 45 million low-income Americans and moved an estimated 4.6 million adults and 2.1 million children out of poverty in 2014. About two-thirds of SNAP recipients are children, elderly, or disabled.

In Idaho, 1 in 7 households struggles to put food on the table, and of those 46.3 percent have at least one wage earner but still need SNAP assistance to live.

A year after Pierce lost her job, she finally found another one—as a paralegal in the office of the attorney general in Idaho. She no longer needed to receive food stamps. Unfortunately, two years later she was laid off again, due to state budget cuts.

Rather than continue to look for work as a paralegal, she decided to go back to her first love—nursing. She had been a nurse before becoming a paralegal, but had stopped because of a knee injury. By now, her knee was better, so Pierce decided to seek full-time work as a nurse. Eventually, she was hired to treat individuals in assisted living homes.

Pierce's experience as a recipient of SNAP benefits has propelled her in becoming a forceful advocate against hunger and poverty. She's participated in an anti-hunger march, spoken at a food bank fundraiser, and even appeared in a documentary about poverty.

At first, Pierce was reluctant to talk about her experience being on food stamps. However, over time, she says that she has grown more accustomed to speaking out about the benefits of safety-net programs, such as SNAP.

"It's not about me anymore, it's about helping someone else," she says.

"It's not about me anymore, it's about helping someone else."

—Dawn Pierce



Courtesy of Dawn Pierce

Dawn Pierce's experiences as a recipient of SNAP benefits has propelled her in becoming a forceful advocate against hunger and poverty.

REAL-LIFE STORIES ON HOW THE FEDERAL BUDGET AFFECTS PEOPLE

Changing Climate, Changing Farmers

Once poor and a domestic worker outside her country, Mercedita Cubar today is the president of the Farmer's Federation of Pototan, a town considered the rice granary of the central Philippines. Despite being the eighth largest rice producer in the world, the Philippines is one of the largest rice importers. Simply put, the Philippines consumes more rice than it produces.

It is not unusual for a woman farmer like Cubar to lead such a group in the Philippines. Eight out of every 10 smallholder farmers worldwide are women, and the Philippines is no exception. However, limited fertile land, irrigation, and now climate change have conspired against farmers working to provide rice to the country's 97 million people.

Climate change is the issue that most worries Cubar and other smallholder farmers. The resulting unpredictability of weather patterns has wreaked havoc on the ability of smallholder farmers to reliably feed people. They are unsure about what kind of rice to plant and when to do so. But now, through the federation, Cubar is teaching fellow smallholder farmers to adapt to climate change.

The Philippines, an archipelago of 7,100 islands strung along the Pacific Ring of Fire, is ranked among the top 10 countries worldwide at risk from climate change and natural disasters. This island chain has one of the highest exposures to climate change risks like typhoons, floods, landslides, and droughts.

Typhoons cost the Philippines as much as \$1.6 billion annually. Among the most impacted are smallholder farmers, predominantly women, who grow most of the rice that feeds Filipinos. Fortunately, many Asian countries like the Philippines have launched programs to help smallholder farmers adapt to rapidly changing weather patterns.

One of those programs is the Philippines Climate Change Adaptation Project (PhilCCAP), made possible through an agreement between the Philippine government and the World Bank. The United States is the World Bank's largest shareholder, which means the U.S. gives a substantial amount of money to the World Bank for development projects that help many people, especially those struggling with hunger and poverty.

"We are trying to change our farming system, not to stick to rice alone."

—Mercedita Cubar

How much money the federal government invests in the World Bank impacts the success of its projects and also how many people living with hunger and poverty can benefit.

One of the hallmarks of the PhilCCAP program is that it teaches weather forecasting to smallholder farmers. This is vital, given the volatility of climate change.

Rapidly changing weather patterns have reduced farm yields in the Philippines. In the past decade, strong typhoons have wiped out entire rice harvests, and extended droughts have withered them. Harvest losses mire smallholder farmers in debt since many small farmers borrow money to buy seeds and fertilizer.

"When you owe a financier, they take what they want from the farm," Cubar says. "It's quite disgusting—working, working, and working for nothing. We saw that if we embrace the project, we will never lose."

Diversification of products and integrated farming is key to a smallholder farmer's survival. As an early adopter of the practice, Cubar now helps other farmers to do the same. She encourages them to branch out beyond rice. She says she knows that hard times may be ahead.

"So I tell them to integrate," she says. "If you don't have money, you sell your chickens. You still need more money? You can sell your pigs. We are trying to change our farming system, not to stick to rice alone."



Joseph Molieri/Bread for the World

Mercedita Cubar is teaching fellow smallholder farmers how to adapt to climate change.

WRITE TO CONGRESS

Ask Congress to Make Funding Decisions That End Hunger by 2030

Through the Offering of Letters, you can be a part of an important campaign! Every year, Bread for the World invites churches and community groups across the country to take up an offering—not of money, but of letters to Congress. Together, individuals write or email their members of Congress asking them to pass legislation that helps people who are hungry and struggling with poverty. According to the Congressional Management Foundation, personalized letters or emails to Congress, whether sent electronically or by mail, are much more influential than form messages.

In 2017 we are raising our collective voice to ask Congress to **make funding decisions that put our country and the world on track to end hunger by 2030**. Information in this toolkit and the sample letter, below, will help you and your group write meaningful hand-written letters or personalized emails to your representative and senators in Congress. Your messages to Congress will push legislators to make funding decisions that put us on track to end hunger by 2030 and will support vital anti-hunger and anti-poverty programs and policies.

SAMPLE LETTER

[Date]

Dear Sen. _____, or Dear Rep. _____,

As Congress works on the 2018 budget and spending bills, I ask you to make funding decisions that will put us on track to end hunger by 2030.

I urge you to adequately invest in programs like WIC, SNAP, tax credits for low-income workers, and international development assistance. These programs are helping millions of people escape from hunger.

We have made great progress reducing hunger and poverty in our country and around the world, but our work remains unfinished. My faith calls me to urge you to make public investments that will reduce and perhaps end hunger.

Sincerely,

[your name]

[your address]

[city, state, ZIP]

For the most current version of this sample letter, updated as legislation moves in Congress, visit bread.org/ol.

Writing a personal message is simple and should take only a few minutes. Follow these steps for an effective letter:

1. Ask for a specific action, using your own words or this sentence:
I urge you to make funding decisions that put us on track toward ending hunger by 2030.
2. Mention a specific House bill or Senate bill if these are available.
3. Give reasons for your request.
 - Share a personal reason that motivated you to write. Letters with personal stories are the most compelling and effective.
 - Show your own commitment to ending hunger: “My church is already helping by [example], but I also expect you to enact a budget and work on spending bills that will end hunger at home and abroad by 2030.”
4. Write your name and address at the end of your letter and on the envelope so your members of Congress know you are one of their constituents.
5. Send your letter to Congress. If you’re mailing your letter, put each letter in a separate envelope and address it. To send a personalized email go to bread.org/eol.

Send your letters to:

Sen. _____
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Rep. _____
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

A PRAYER AND LITANY FOR AN OFFERING OF LETTERS

Commit Your Efforts to God

Prayer Over Letters

Holy God, we give thanks that all good things come from you. You created us in your image, and invite us to share our love for you with one another. In a world where too many children go without food and where communities are torn apart by inequality and violence, we give thanks that your power is everlasting. We pray that you will empower us to do our part to end hunger—as individuals, as communities, and even as elected officials. We pray for members of Congress who will receive letters asking them to make funding decisions that put us on track toward ending hunger by 2030. We pray that their hearts will be moved to act in accordance with your will. Help us to speak out when we see injustice, to answer the call when there is need, to be a blessing for the world. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Prayer Over Letters

Heavenly God, in these days of anguish and despair, of hunger that is both spiritual and physical, we ask you to be the living expression of your love and charity for all. We ask that in a hostile climate, we plant your peace and love; that we may be your light during the darkest days; and that in serving the neediest we are a living reflection of your compassion and mercy. We ask that all the letters and personal emails sent to members of Congress arrive with the blessing of your Holy Spirit and that they touch the hearts and minds of our leaders. We thank you, beloved God, for allowing us to serve as the voice of your people. Lord, we ask that you listen to our prayer in the name of your Son and our Lord, Jesus. Amen.

Litany or Responsive Prayer

Lord, you are the bread of life; we ask that all of God's people have both spiritual bread and the bread to nourish themselves every day.

Lord, help us to be the expression of your love and mercy in the world.

Lord, you are merciful; we pray for our elected leaders, especially the new Congress and new president, that your spirit of love and wisdom be shed on them so that all people may be treated with justice and dignity.

Lord, help us to be the living image of your mercy in the world.

Lord, you are a just God; we ask that you cultivate in each of us the thirst for fighting for those most in need.

Lord, help us to be protectors of your creation.

Lord, that the mission of helping others by eradicating hunger become the duty of all, following your example in the Gospel: "I was hungry and you gave me something to eat."

Lord, help us to eradicate hunger in the world.

God and Creator of all, we ask that your love and charity fill our hearts, guide our actions, and enlighten our words. We ask you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

The first prayer was written by Marco A. Grimaldo, senior national associate for Latino engagement at Bread for the World. The second prayer and the litany were written by Elisabeth Roman, president of the National Catholic Council for the Hispanic Ministry in the United States.

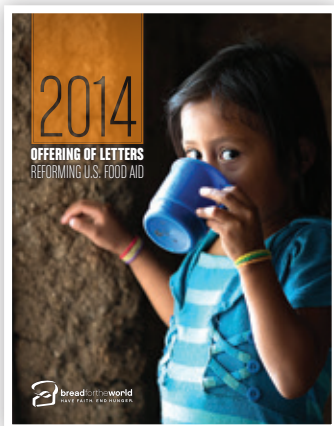


Lena Isely for Bread for the World

Personal letters are crucial and effective. But they are only the first step. Consider following up with a phone call, a letter to the editor of your local newspaper, and a visit to the local offices of your members of Congress. Meet your senators or representative in Washington, D.C., during Bread for the World's Lobby Day in June 2017.

YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE

VICTORIES FROM RECENT OFFERINGS OF LETTERS



2014

Despite deep partisanship and gridlock in Congress,

Bread secured \$35 million in fiscal year 2014 to reduce the need to monetize food aid (which means selling food-aid commodities to fund development projects). This win helped feed 200,000 more people. The farm bill authorized \$80 million to purchase food locally where it is needed and included provisions that give the government more flexibility in providing food aid, helping 600,000 more people annually. The House and Senate passed amendments increasing funding to food-aid reform provisions. And Bread helped halt the passage of a provision that would have taken away \$75 million of food-aid funds to further subsidize the world's shipping companies. If passed, it would have reduced the reach of food-aid programs by 2 million people annually.



2015

The 2015 Offering of Letters resulted in strong, bipartisan support in Congress for strengthening children's access to important nutrition programs, especially those for summer meals. Numerous bills were introduced to give more children the meals they needed, such as the Summer Meals Act and the Stop Child Summer Hunger Act. Focused advocacy on this issue continued into the following year. In early 2016, the Senate Agriculture Committee considered and passed a bipartisan child nutrition bill that helped connect more hungry children with nutritious meals, particularly during the summer months. At publication time, negotiations have stalled and we continue to work to pass a strong child nutrition bill in the next Congress. Bread activists were instrumental in helping to pass a two-year budget deal that lifted deep sequestration cuts and protected critical funding for programs such as the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).



2016

While 2016 was a tumultuous year marked by partisanship and intense disagreements, the 2016 Offering of Letters achieved victory despite the congressional gridlock. In July 2016, Congress passed the Global Food Security Act with overwhelming bipartisan support. This world hunger bill ensured that the Feed the Future initiative would continue to support smallholder farmers and improve the nutrition of women and children around the world. It authorized more than \$3.7 billion for programs that help feed hungry people. And, while we did not achieve our goal of \$250 million for nutrition in global health programs through congressional appropriations, Congress did maintain strong funding for nutrition at \$125 million in both their appropriations bills and continuing resolutions. Finally, the 2016 Offering of Letters brought to the forefront strong bipartisan support for global maternal and child nutrition in Congress—more than 180 members of Congress signed letters in support of robust funding for maternal and child nutrition programs in 2016.