



October 3, 2011

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid
522 Hart Senate Office Bldg
Washington, DC 20510

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Speaker of the House John Boehner
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

House Majority Leader Eric Cantor
H-329, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi
235 Cannon H.O.B.
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressional Leaders,

We write you today because of the significant impact your fiscal policy deliberations have on the human rights and economic well-being of all people in the United States. While mindful of the difficulty in reaching consensus on critical economic issues, we remind you that any decisions must be based on protecting and fulfilling people's human rights, which include the rights to health care, housing, education, food, social protection, and decent jobs. We are concerned that so many people in our country lack access to these basic rights, as evidenced by high rates of unemployment, homelessness, hunger, and inadequate health coverage. Therefore, **we urge you to set a goal of meeting people's fundamental needs in all your deliberations, working to meet those needs by raising much needed revenue. Our country has the means to do this by requiring those largely responsible for the economic crisis – banks, corporations, and wealthy beneficiaries of tax cuts – to pay their fair share.** As the members of the *Super-Committee* begin their work, they must consider the potentially harmful impacts of any further spending cuts on the lives of struggling communities and

individuals and their human rights such as access to decent jobs and to an adequate standard of living.
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As you know, macroeconomic policies determine whether there are enough decent jobs and adequate resources for housing, education, health care and other crucial public services and social programs. **As elected representatives you have a responsibility to ensure that laws and policies, including those addressing the deficit, do not serve to increase poverty, inequality, and undermine basic human rights and dignity.**

The recent debt ceiling deal – adopted in the context of an inflammatory debate that failed to prioritize your constituents’ actual needs and demands – placed a clear burden on the shoulders of ordinary people and their families, whose struggles are becoming harder every day. At the same time, unprecedented privileges have been extended to the wealthy and corporations, in the form of tax cuts, tax expenditures, corporate subsidies, and bailouts.

Responsible macroeconomic policymaking requires Congress to use all levers, including borrowing and revenue raising, to meet increased needs during an economic downturn. Congress must adopt a more equitable and redistributive tax system in which corporations and individuals all pay their fair share, tax rates adjust in proportion to income and wealth, loopholes are eliminated, and financial transactions are taxed. Including such revenue increases and tax code changes in your proposals and laws will enable our country to commit to appropriate and sufficient public spending directed at meeting people’s fundamental needs.

The human rights record of the United States and its reputation as a democracy that promises an adequate standard of living for all is increasingly eroded by growing poverty, record joblessness, a severe housing crisis, and unprecedented levels of inequality. This is part of the perilous disconnect between current macroeconomic policies and the measures necessary to fulfill the basic economic and social rights of all people living in the United States.

¹ Note the United States acceptance of the recommendation (92.113) on decent work in its United Nations Universal Periodic Review. The recommendation states, “that further measures be taken in the areas of economic and social rights for women and minorities, including providing equal access to decent work and reducing the number of homeless people.” Furthermore, as a member of the Organization of American States, the United States has a binding obligation under the *American Declaration on the Rights and Duties of Man* to protect the human right to social security (see American Declaration, Article 16: “Every person has the right to social security which will protect him from the consequences of unemployment, old age, and any disabilities arising from causes beyond his control that make it physically or mentally impossible for him to earn a living.”).



As economists, human rights advocates, and concerned community members, we believe that Congress can and must protect and fulfill human rights in all your spending and revenue decisions. Such economic policy making will secure both the rebuilding of the U.S. economy and ensure that everyone in the United States has access to good jobs, high quality education, housing, health care, and other fundamental public services.

Regards,

Advocates for Environmental Human Rights, New Orleans, LA
Alabama State Association of Cooperatives, Forkland, AL
American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) Michigan, Dearborn, MI
Amigos Multicultural Services Center, Eugene, OR
Best Practices Policy Project, Washington, DC
Center for Economic and Social Rights, Washinton, DC
Center for Women's Global Leadership, New Brunswick, NJ
Center of Concern, Washington, DC
Chicago Anti-Eviction Campagin, Chicago, IL
Coalition of African, Arab, Asian, European and Latino Immigrants of IL (CAAELII), Chicago, IL
Coalition of Immokalee Workers, Immokalee, FL
Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund, Berkeley, CA
Federation of Southern Cooperatives, Rural Training and Research Center, Epes, AL
First Peoples Human Rights Coalition, Brooklyn, NY
Four Freedoms Forum, Washington, DC
Georgia Peace & Justice Coalition, Atlanta, GA
Harrison County Federation of Democratic Women, Gulfport, MS
Hawaii Institute for Human Rights, Honolulu, HI
Immaculate Heart Community Development Corporation, Benndale, MS
Institute of Race, Health Care & the Law, Dayton, OH
International Workers Justice Campaign, Raleigh, NC
James Heintz, Associate Director of Political Economy Research Institute, Amherst, MA
Main Street Project, Minneapolis, MN
Malcolm X Center for Self-Determination, Greenville, SC
Marianists International, New York, NY
Mayday New Orleans, New Orleans, LA
Meiklejohn Civil Liberties Institute, Berkeley, CA
Metro Atlanta Task Force for the Homeless, Atlanta, GA
Montana Human Rights Network, Helena, MT



National Economic and Social Rights Initiative, New York, NY
National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, Washington, DC
National Lawyers Guild International Committee, New York, NY
PCN International, Charlottesville, VA
People's Health Movement – USA, Berkeley, CA
PLBA Housing Development and Management Corporation, Gainesville, AL
SisterSong, Atlanta, GA
Sex Workers Outreach Project (SWOP USA), Santa Cruz, CA
Survivors Village, New Orleans, LA
The Advocates for Human Rights, Minneapolis, MN
The Center for Constitutional Rights, New York, NY
The Greene County Democrat, Eutaw, AL
U.S. Women Connect, Kansas City, MO
United Nations Association-USA, East Bay Chapter, Berkeley, CA
Urban Justice Center, New York, NY
US Human Rights Network, Atlanta, GA
Vermont Workers' Center, Burlington, VT
Wellspring, Brooklyn, NY
Women Watch Afrika, Inc., Decatur, GA
Women's Intercultural Network (WIN), San Francisco, CA
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, U.S. Section, Boston, MA

Copy to: President of the United States of America Barack H. Obama
Vice-President of the United States of America Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
Director of Human Rights of the National Security Council Catherine Powell
Legal Adviser of the Department of State Harold Koh
Co-chair of the Super-Committee and Republican Conference Chairman Representative Jeb Hensarling
Co-chair of the Super-Committee Senator Patty Murray
Senate President Pro Tempore Daniel K. Inouye
Assistant Senate Majority Leader Richard Durbin
Assistant Senate Minority Leader Jon Kyl
House Majority Whip Kevin McCarthy
House Committee on Ways and Means Chair Dave Camp
Republican Policy Committee Chairman Tom Price
House Democratic Whip Steny Hoyer
Assistant Democratic Leader of the House James Clyburn
Democratic Caucus Chairman John Larson