



January 26, 2009

Governor Jim Doyle
State Capitol
Room 115 East
Madison, WI 53702

Dear Governor Doyle,

As you reach your final decisions on the budget you will soon submit to the legislature, we urge you to make every effort to fund those programs that effectively serve our state's most vulnerable residents.

Any economic downturn imposes pain and suffering. Yet one constant in such difficult times is that those with the least tend to lose the most. A loss of income or savings that poses a temporary inconvenience in some families is often truly devastating to those who were just getting by in better times. Those who were in need of the community's help prior to the current downturn need it even more now. The programs and public benefits that aided them in 2008 will be even more necessary in 2009.

We do not make this request lightly. Nor do we make it without appreciating the difficult decisions you face. Like you, we must balance budgets. Like the state government, our faith communities face the challenge of meeting greater needs when economic problems affect revenues available to us.

But it is precisely at these times that we must affirm our commitment to the core principles that define who we are as a society. One of these core principles is that the poor have a special claim on the support and assistance of the community, regardless of the circumstances.

This need to exercise an "option for the poor" is not unique to our faith traditions. Many others share it. Indeed, it is very much a part of Wisconsin's noble tradition of progressive government.

Your efforts to help those who need it most will have our support. We also remain committed to helping the vulnerable through our churches and synagogues, hospitals, schools, and charitable agencies. But we cannot by ourselves meet the need that exists. Our next state budget must allow this partnership to continue to help those who need help.

No doubt you will wrestle with the question of whether additional revenues are needed to meet the needs of our people. We are not experts on the issue of taxation. At the same time we note that in good times some have prospered more than others. That factor deserves consideration as you weigh this particular matter.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter and for all that you have done in the past to assist the vulnerable. Please know that you have our support as you face the imposing task before you.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Scott Anderson.

Scott Anderson
Executive Director
Wisconsin Council of Churches

Handwritten signature of John A. Huebscher.

John A. Huebscher
Executive Director
Wisconsin Catholic Conference

Handwritten signature of Michael Blumenfeld.

Michael Blumenfeld
Executive Director
Wisconsin Jewish Conference

Handwritten signature of Amy M. Johnson.

Amy M. Johnson
Executive Director
Lutheran Office for Public Policy