

business to the health of his community. He works to promote enterprise and innovation as a member of the Chamber of Commerce and the Farm Bureau, and continues to operate his own small ranch.

Roger is committed to using his position as Guadalupe County Commissioner to promote orderly growth and fiscal responsibility. As a public servant and a volunteer, he has given an enormous amount back to the community in which he was born and raised. I am proud to have this opportunity to honor his service, and to thank him for all he has done for the people of Guadalupe County.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to have had this opportunity to recognize the many achievements of Guadalupe County Commissioner Roger Baenziger.

JOINT STATEMENT BY LEADERS  
OF PROTESTANT DENOMINATIONS

**HON. ROSA L. DeLAURO**

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 8, 2005*

Ms. DeLAURO. Mr. Speaker, Budgets are moral documents, which reflect the values and priorities of our nation. Drawing from my own faith, the Catholic Bishops have stated, "The obligation to provide justice for all means that the poor have the single most urgent economic claim on the conscience of the nation." The more I hear this Administration's justification for the harsh decisions within their budget, the more I believe that there is no justification. This budget simply reflects the wrong values and priorities. That is why I would like to enter for today's RECORD a joint statement by the leaders of five mainline Protestant denominations representing over 20 million followers in the United States. These religious leaders today called President Bush's 2006 federal budget "unjust."

The statement is signed by: the Most Reverend Frank Griswold, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church USA, the Right Reverend Mark Hanson, Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, the Reverend Dr. Clifton Kirkpatrick, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church (USA), United Church of Christ General Minister and President John H. Thomas, and James Winkler, General Secretary of the General Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church.

JOINT STATEMENT

WASHINGTON, DC, Mar. 8, 2005.—We are preachers, and so, in explaining our opposition to the 2006 Federal Budget that President Bush has sent to Congress, it seems only fitting that we should begin with Scripture.

There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. He called out, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames"

The passage comes from 16th chapter of the Gospel according to Luke, and it contains a warning that should deeply trouble those of us who live in a wealthy nation. As the story continues, the rich man implores Abraham to raise Lazarus from the dead and send him to the house of his brothers so that they may be spared his torment.

"They have Moses and the prophets," Abraham replies. "They should listen to them." The rich man says, "No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent." And Abraham answers, "If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead."

In telling this story, Jesus makes clear that perpetrating economic injustice is among the gravest of sins. Yet self-interest is so deeply ingrained in each one of us, he says, that we will not renounce it, even should someone rise from the dead. Jesus was right about that. It was he who rose from the dead to save us from greed and myriad other sins. Yet those who have much continue feasting, even as those who have little remain at their gates.

Like many Americans, we read our daily newspaper through the lens of faith, and when we see injustice, it is our duty to say so. The 2006 Federal Budget that President Bush has sent to Capitol Hill is unjust. It has much for the rich man and little for Lazarus. According to the White House's own numbers, this budget would move 300,000 people off food stamps in the next five years. It would cut the funds that allow 300,000 children to receive day care. It would reduce funding for Medicaid by \$45 billion over the next ten years, and this at a time when 45 million Americans—the highest level on record—are already without health insurance.

These cuts would be alarming in any circumstances, but in the context of the 2006 budget, they are especially troubling. For even as it reduces aid to those in poverty, this budget showers presents on the rich. If passed in its current form, it would make permanent tax cuts that have bestowed nearly three quarters of the "relief" on one-fifth of the country. If passed in its current form, it would include whopping new cuts that would benefit, almost exclusively, those with household incomes of more than \$200,000 per year. If passed in its current form, it would take Jesus' teaching on economic justice and stands it on its head.

Some contend that these cuts will stimulate the economy and improve life for all Americans, but we believe that stocking the rich man's larder is a peculiar strategy for getting Lazarus more food. Not only does this policy rest on dubious economic assumptions, but it asks the poor to pay the cost for a prosperity in which they may never share.

Some contend that works of mercy are not the business of the government but of private citizens. But in what other area of our national life do we formulate policies uninformed by our deepest values?

Some contend that with the proper support faith-based charities will step forward to fill the gap created by the government's retreat. But this flies in the face of the lessons that we, as religious leaders, have learned first hand. Our churches operate thousands of charities from the parochial to the international. Believe us when we tell you that neither we, nor our Evangelical brothers and sisters, nor our friends of other faiths have anywhere near the resources to turn back the rising tide of poverty in this country. We know that programs, whether governmental or non-profit, can change people's lives for the better. New situations challenge us to respond to new conditions and to support those who are in transition out of poverty. Sadly,

the 2006 budget will send more people searching for food in cupboards that, quite frequently, are bare.

Our churches will continue their ameliorative ministries. But it is not enough for us as a Church or a society to be merciful. We must remember the admonition of the prophet Micah. "And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God?" Micah's choice of verbs is instructive. We are not to love justice or preach justice, we are to do justice—to act, and, when necessary, to struggle.

We urge the members of our churches, of other churches and other faiths, and all whose conscience compels them to do justice to join us in opposing this budget. Write to your representatives. Write to your local newspaper. Join the organizations working to obtain justice for the 36 million Americans living below the poverty line, the 45 million without health insurance and the unknown millions struggling to keep their families from slipping into these ever increasing ranks. Together, let us pledge ourselves to creating a nation in which economic policies are infused with the spirit of the man who began his public ministry almost 2,000 years ago by proclaiming that God had anointed him "to bring good news to the poor."

Signed by:

The Most Reverend FRANK  
T. GRISWOLD,

*Presiding Bishop and  
Primate of the Epis-  
copal Church, USA.*

The Right Reverend MARK  
HANSON,

*Presiding Bishop of  
the Evangelical Lu-  
theran Church in  
America.*

The Reverend Dr. CLIFTON  
KIRKPATRICK,

*Stated Clerk of the  
General Assembly,  
Presbyterian  
Church, (U.S.A.).*

The Reverend JOHN H.  
THOMAS,

*General Minister and  
President, United  
Church of Christ.*

Mr. JAMES WINKLER,

*General Secretary,  
General Board of  
Church and Society,  
United Methodist  
Church.*

JOB TRAINING IMPROVEMENT ACT  
OF 2005

SPEECH OF

**HON. BETTY McCOLLUM**

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, March 2, 2005*

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 27) to enhance the workforce investment system of the Nation by strengthening one-stop career centers, providing for more effective governance arrangements, promoting access to a more comprehensive array of employment, training, and related services, establishing a targeted approach to serving youth, and improving performance accountability, and for other purposes:

Ms. McCOLLUM of Minnesota. Mr. Chairman, I rise in opposition to H.R. 27, the so-called Job Training Improvement Act of 2005.