



## **CONGRESS TO FINALIZE LEGISLATION ON HIV/AIDS AND DEBT RELIEF!**

*July 19, 2002*

**WHY YOU ARE RECEIVING THIS ALERT:** A new bipartisan bill to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis worldwide has passed the Senate (**H.R. 2069**, originally introduced as S. 2525). It includes important new debt relief for poor countries. The Senate and House will soon meet to reconcile differences between this bill and a similar global health bill (without debt relief provisions) passed last year by the House. We need to contact members in both Chambers and push for the most generous response by the United States to the health and debt crisis gripping many poor countries, especially in Africa.

### **BACKGROUND:**

#### HIV/AIDS

- ◆ Today there are 40 million people living with HIV/AIDS around the world. Sub-Saharan Africa, with only 10 percent of the world's population, has 70 percent of the world's HIV-positive people.
- ◆ Approximately 12 million children were orphaned by the AIDS disaster by 2000, leading to a dramatic rise in the number of child-headed households.
- ◆ Experts have estimated \$10 billion to \$15 billion per year is needed to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other life-threatening communicable diseases.
- ◆ A fair annual contribution by the United States based upon its share of the world economy would reach at least \$2.5 billion, which is almost three times what the U.S. is currently spending.

#### Debt

- ◆ Many poor countries have begun to see their debts reduced through the Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) initiative, which was adopted in 1996 and expanded in 1999 in response to successful advocacy by the global Jubilee 2000 movement, in which we played a major role.
- ◆ However, as implementation of the HIPC program proceeds, a substantial disparity in the amount of debt relief being received by HIPC countries has become evident. This is because the amount of debt relief under HIPC is determined by a country's export earnings rather than its budgetary resources.
- ◆ Countries such as Rwanda and Ethiopia are receiving relief sufficient to free up substantial resources for critically needed investments in health care, education, and other programs for poverty reduction. Most HIPC countries, however, are receiving much less, a situation that is particularly troubling because so many of them desperately need to maximize the resources available to combat the scourge of HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases.

## KEY FEATURES OF THE LEGISLATION:

On July 12, 2002, the U.S. Senate passed the “**United States Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria Act of 2002**” (**H.R. 2069**). This bipartisan bill, co-sponsored by Sen. John Kerry (D-MA) and Sen. Bill Frist (R-TN) authorizes:

- ◆ A total of \$3.3 billion over two years in new US funding to combat HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria;
- ◆ Support for a range of HIV/AIDS programs including prevention education, respite/hospice care, training of medical workers, research, and coordination among all US programs.
- ◆ Deeper debt reduction, in order that all countries that are currently eligible for debt reduction under the HIPC initiative would limit their annual debt payments to no more than 10 percent of government revenues, or in the case of countries suffering a public health crisis, no more than 5 percent of government revenues.

On December 11, 2001, the House of Representatives passed the “**Global Access to HIV/AIDS Prevention, Awareness, Education, and Treatment Act of 2002**,” legislation introduced by Reps. Hyde (R-IL) and Lantos (D-CA) to address the crisis of HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases by:

- ◆ Authorizing \$1.3 billion in 2003 of new U.S. funding for HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria programs;
- ◆ According equal priority to prevention and treatment, and calling for coordination of various U.S. agencies dealing with HIV/AIDS;
- ◆ Expanding programs to promote behavioral change, strengthen health care delivery systems, and support home-based and hospice care;
- ◆ Providing for the care and support of orphans and assistance to help reduce transmission of HIV/AIDS from mother to child.

Although the House version of the bill does not contain the debt relief provisions in the Senate bill, a freestanding bill with very similar debt relief language — **H.R. 4524**, “**The Debt Relief Enhancement Act of 2002**”— was introduced earlier this year by Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ) and Rep. John LaFalce (D-NJ). While the bill has substantial bipartisan support, it has yet to be brought to a committee vote. If we can mobilize strong support for **H.R. 4524** through committee consideration, it will encourage the House to accept the debt reduction language when they meet with their Senate colleagues to decide on the final content of the bill for combating HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria.

**USCCB/CRS POSITION:** The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic Relief Services urge Congress to adopt a final bill that:

- ◆ Substantially increase funding to combat HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria to;
- ◆ Include provisions for supporting and promoting behavioral change and responsible and respectful relationships;
- ◆ Deepen debt reduction to poor countries, so maximize the resources that are available to address infectious diseases.

## **ACTION:**

**A.** Contact your **Senators** and urge them to adopt a final bill to combat HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria that will:

- ◆ retain the Senate provisions to increase funding to address the health crisis devastating many poor countries in Africa and elsewhere to at least \$3.3 billion over two years;
- ◆ combat HIV/AIDS in a manner that will support and promote behavioral change and responsible and respectful relationships;
- ◆ retain the proposals for debt relief contained in the Senate bill.

**B.** Contact your **Representatives** and urge them to:

- ◆ support and cosponsor H.R. 4524;
- ◆ adopt a final bill to combat HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria that will:
  1. accept the Senate provisions to increase funding to address the health crisis devastating many poor countries in Africa and elsewhere, to at least \$3.3 billion over two years;
  2. combat HIV/AIDS in a manner that will promote behavioral change and responsible and respectful relationships;
  3. include the proposals for debt relief contained in the H.R. 2069 (or H.R. 4524).

**TARGETS:** It is important to contact as many members as possible to show support for our position on these bills. It is particularly important to contact the following target list of Senators and Representatives who are mostly members of the Committees likely negotiate the differences between the two global health bills.

### **Senators:**

Joseph Biden (D-DE)  
Rick Santorum (R-PA)  
Bill Frist (R-TN)  
Lincoln Chafee (R-RI)  
Mike DeWine (R-OH)  
Paul Sarbanes (D-MD)  
John Kerry (D-MA)  
Jesse Helms (R-NC)  
Richard Lugar (R-IN)  
Chuck Hagel (R-NE)  
Gordon Smith (R-OR)  
Patrick Leahy (D-VT)  
Christopher Dodd (D-CT)

### **Representatives:**

Christopher Smith (R-NJ)  
John LaFalce (D-PA)  
Spencer Bachus (R-AL)  
James Leach (R-IA)  
Barney Frank (D-MA)  
Maxine Waters (D-CA)  
Dennis Kucinich (D-OH)  
Michael Oxley (R-OH)  
Doug Ose (R-CA)  
Henry Hyde (R-IL)  
Doug Bereuter (R-NE)  
Edward Royce (R-CA)  
Tom Lantos (D-CA)  
Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL)  
Peter King (R-NY)  
Donald Payne (D-NJ)  
Cynthia McKinney (D-GA)  
Barbara Lee (D-CA)  
Bernard Sanders (I-VT)  
Jim Kolbe (R-AZ)  
Michael Castle (R-DE)  
Judy Biggert (R-IL)  
Mike Ferguson (R-NJ)

*For more information, contact: Gerry Flood or Kelly Hicks, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, (202) 541-3153, [www.USCCB.org/sdwp/international](http://www.USCCB.org/sdwp/international) or Kathy Selvaggio or Kathy Brown, Catholic Relief Services, (410) 625-2220, [www.catholicrelief.org/get\\_involved/advocacy/index.cfm](http://www.catholicrelief.org/get_involved/advocacy/index.cfm).*