

State's Catholic, Lutheran bishops seek budget deficit solutions that protect poor and the common good . . .

The following letter, dated March 15, was written by the Minnesota bishops of the Roman Catholic Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

By now, you are immersed in the challenges of providing legislative and executive leadership for all Minnesotans. As citizens, we take seriously the need for change in addressing the Herculean task that lies before us. The responsibilities you face as you lead us and consider the future of our state present opportunities to uphold the dignity and worth of all Minnesotans.

You are already deeply into erasing a large budget deficit, an enormous challenge that suggests both dollar savings and increased income to achieve a balanced budget that avoids devastating cuts in services to vulnerable people. In many of the political campaigns of last fall, we heard politicians speak of "fairness" and "equality" as they spoke of the task ahead. We ask you today to consider "justice" as you engage in your work. Justice means that the common good of all citizens serves as the hallmark of a strong society and a vital economy.

We expect that, as you seek to balance the budget, you will engage in civil and respectful dialogue rather than partisanship and posturing. We trust that you will seek to govern the people of the state of Minnesota so that all citizens — particularly those who are poor and live on the margins of our communities — have access to housing, education, health care and other human services. We suggest that the most effective means of eliminating poverty resides in policies that lift people out of a safety net to a level of sustainability.

Minnesota has a history of caring for all its citizens, and all of us are heirs of those who shaped that legacy. Catholics and Lutherans — representing some two million Minnesotans — have partnered in that legacy as the largest providers of health care, human services and non-public education. Being a state that cares for its people has been the hallmark of Minnesota.

And the most telling measure of how well we care for each other is to consider how we treat those who are most vulnerable among us. We believe there exists in the people of this state the will to respond to the human needs among the poor with compassion, generosity and resolve. We challenge you to remember all Minnesotans as you make decisions that affect the people, the economy, and the character of this state. We pledge our support, our prayer, and our best effort to these same ends as we each seek to be faithful stewards of the common good in this state.

Roman Catholic bishops of Minnesota:

Archbishop John Nienstedt, Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis
Bishop Michael Hoepfner, Diocese of Crookston
Bishop John Kinney, Diocese of St. Cloud
Bishop John LeVoir, Diocese of New Ulm
Bishop Lee Piché, Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis
Bishop John Quinn, Diocese of Winona
Bishop Paul Sirba, Diocese of Duluth

ELCA bishops of Minnesota

Bishop Jon Anderson, Southwestern Minnesota Synod
Bishop Thomas Aitken, Northeastern Minnesota Synod
Bishop Craig Johnson, Minneapolis Area Synod
Bishop Peter Rogness, St. Paul Area Synod
Bishop Harold Usgaard, Southeastern Minnesota Synod
Bishop Lawrence Wohlrahe, Northwestern Minnesota Synod

You are encouraged to contact your respective Legislator to share your feelings on the issues presented in the Bishops' letter. The below addresses will take you to Legislators contact information.

House Members-- <http://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/members/hmem.asp>

Senate Members-- http://www.senate.leg.state.mn.us/members/member_list.php?sort=d&ls=#header