

# Liberal Christian leaders blast GOP tax bill

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c. 2012 Religion News Service WASHINGTON (RNS) A coalition of liberal Christian leaders blasted a GOP budget plan that would extend Bush-era tax cuts for the wealthy while slashing key provisions for the poor.

The bill, which is being used by both parties as part of election-year jockeying, would slash the Earned Income Tax Credit, which supplements wages of low-income workers, and the Child Tax Credit, which provides up to \$1,000 financial support per child for poor working families.

At the same time, the bill would extend Bush-era tax cuts for the highest income earners: individuals earning over \$200,000 a year and families earning over \$250,000.

The tax cuts, which were renewed two years ago on a temporary basis, are set to expire at year's end.

In a letter delivered to Capitol Hill on Wednesday (Aug. 1), 60 faith leaders urged Congress "to put families and workers before ideological agendas that favor the powerful."

"To roll back tax credits for the poor to help fund tax breaks for the rich is simply morally reprehensible," said the Rev. Jim Wallis, president and CEO of the social justice organization Sojourners, who called the federal budget a "moral document" that should transcend party politics.

The Rev. David Beckmann, president of the ecumenical hunger group Bread for the World, said letting tax benefits expire for the highest earners would create \$830 billion in revenue over the next 10 years. This money, he said, could be spent on helping those who struggle with poverty.

Beckmann added many working families rely on tax credits for necessities like food and shelter.

"The food budget is usually the first thing families cut when times get tough, but tax credits like the EITC and CTC help struggling families put food on the table and make ends meet," he said.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has also urged Congress to extend tax credits for the poor.

The Senate narrowly passed a Democratic bill last week that would let expire tax cuts for families making \$250,000 and over, or individuals making \$200,000 and over, while extending breaks for middle-class taxpayers.

If the House bill passes its bill, as expected, a committee of party leaders will meet to work out differences between the House and Senate bills.