



Department of Social Development and World Peace

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June 25, 2007

The Honorable Adam Smith
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Spencer Bachus
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Smith and Mr. Bachus,

On behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), I congratulate you for the introduction of the Global Poverty Act of 2007 (HR 1302) and offer support for its passage.

In 100 countries around the world, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), the relief and development agency of the U.S. bishops, has witnessed the tragic circumstances of millions of people who suffer and die as a result of crushing poverty. The work of CRS and its partners in individual countries is motivated by the Church's preferential option for the poor. Pope Benedict XVI recently reminded us of this obligation, warning that "the distance between the rich and poor produces a worrying degradation of human dignity." (São Paulo, Brazil, May 13, 2007).

USCCB has long been a strong advocate of initiatives to combat global poverty. Our commitment to the poor flows from our moral responsibility to care for "the least among us." Our Conference has supported programs for increased and more effective foreign aid, debt relief for very poor countries, and expanded trade opportunities for poor workers and communities around the world.

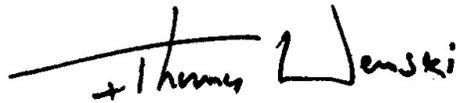
We welcome the Global Poverty Act's emphasis on working to achieve the U.N. Millennium Development Goal of cutting extreme poverty in half by 2015. The legislation appropriately commits our nation to a comprehensive approach involving aid, trade and debt relief. The bill also recognizes the importance of cooperation and coordination with all partners engaged in development, especially with developing countries and non-governmental organizations here and abroad. The requirement of an annual report by the Administration will focus our nation's attention on poverty reduction and will provide an important opportunity to assess whether progress is being made in coming to the aid of our most vulnerable brothers and sisters.

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We urge Congress to work with the President and the Administration to achieve the purposes of HR 1302 and promote a dramatic reduction in global poverty. Among other steps, this may require substantial reform of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961.

With good wishes for your work on behalf of the world's poorest people and communities, I remain,

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas Wenski". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "T" and a distinct "W".

Most Reverend Thomas G. Wenski
Bishop of Orlando
Chairman, Committee on International Policy