

THE REV. CHARLES S. CURRIE, JR.

A MINISTER IN THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

October 5, 2010

SENT VIA E-MAIL

The Honorable Barack Obama
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As a minister in the United Church of Christ with a long history of working on issues related to homelessness and poverty, I wanted to take this opportunity to both thank you for your work to help alleviate poverty during the economic crisis you inherited and to urge you to publically recommit to the pledge you made in 2007 to cut poverty in half within ten years if elected president.

Many of the efforts you have championed such as the Affordable Care Act and the Recovery Act have provided real change in the lives of Americans suffering during these difficult times. As a former board member of the National Coalition for the Homeless, I'm impressed with the "Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness" initiative and the recommendations on poverty made by your faith council. Further, your budget goals move us in the right direction in a number of areas.

Regardless, we lack a national coordinated effort to implement your campaign pledge. I respectfully request that you use a moment of national importance - such as the 2011 State of the Union Address - to re-state your goal of cutting poverty in half and to offer a plan of action that will move us toward that objective. I'm asking for more than a symbolic gesture.

In 2007, you said:


We can't allow this kind of suffering and hopelessness to exist in our country. We can't afford to lose a generation of tomorrow's doctors and scientists and teachers to poverty. We can make excuses for it or we can fight about it or we can ignore poverty altogether, but as long as it's here it will always be a betrayal of the ideals we hold as Americans. It's not who we are.

We don't want our children to be looking back 40 years from now - as you said during the campaign - and say, as Bobby Kennedy asked 40 years ago: "How can a country like this allow it?"

Your efforts thus far are deeply appreciated and noted. This letter is in no way meant to be a criticism. At the same time, there were 19,000 students experiencing homeless in Oregon's public schools last year - a 5.5 percent increase from the previous year and a 134 percent increase over the past seven. We'll get less federal assistance to help these students this year because the stimulus dollars won't be there to help. We have a crisis and I believe that a more coordinated effort from the White House - combined with your public leadership - could help inspire the nation to achieve the goal you articulated in 2007 to cut poverty in half over the next ten years.

Thank you, Mr. President, for your consideration. As always, you and your family are in my prayers.

Your brother in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Currie', written in a cursive style.

The Rev. Chuck Currie

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cc: Joshua DuBois, executive director, White House Office of Faith Based & Neighborhood Partnerships
P. Darron Monteiro, White House Office of Public Engagement