



WASHINGTON BUREAU · NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE
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ACTION ALERT

DATE: April 4, 2008
TO: Concerned Parties
FROM: Hilary O. Shelton, Director, Washington Bureau

NAACP-Supported *Jubilee Act*, to Help Bring Debt Relief to Impoverished Countries, Moves to Full House for Vote as Early as April 8, 2008

THE ISSUE:

International debt is sometimes a necessary tool used by nations to finance the domestic human needs of their citizens. Too much debt, however, can become unmanageable for any nation to repay. For example, in Sub-Saharan Africa, the approximate number of people living on less than a dollar a day has actually increased since 1990. If current trends are not reversed, Africa will be the only region in the world where there will be more poor people in 2015 than there were in 1990. The *Jubilee Act*, now pending in the U.S. Congress, will help lift the burden of international debt which many poor and developing nations face as obstacles to fulfilling their full potential.

The World Bank and the United Nations have estimated that an additional \$45 billion to \$75 billion will be needed globally every year to cut extreme global poverty in half by 2015. Some of this money can be generated from aid, but new infusions of aid cannot be effective unless the drain of debt payments is stopped. Pouring more aid into impoverished countries without debt cancellation is like trying to fill a bathtub with the drain open. Debt prevents nations from fulfilling crucial needs such as health care, housing, education and strategic infrastructure development.

In the year 2000, world leaders at the United Nations committed to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a set of global development goals aimed alleviating poverty throughout the world by the year 2015. A critical method through which this can be achieved must include debt relief. When implemented well, we know that debt relief works. In countries such as Burundi, Ghana, Honduras, Tanzania and Zambia, money saved from debt relief has been used to improve infrastructure, education, health care, housing as well access to daily basic necessities of life such as food and clean drinking water.

While significant progress has been achieved, debilitating debt is still a problem for all too many impoverished countries. To further address this problem, Congresswoman Maxine Waters (CA) and Senators Robert Casey (PA), Richard Lugar (IN), and Chris Dodd (CT) have introduced H.R. 2634 / S. 2166, the *Jubilee Act*, which calls for the U.S. Treasury to support 100% debt relief to poor countries that need it most. This legislation would help deeply indebted countries to improve infrastructure, education, housing and health care and to ensure access to adequate nutrition and clean drinking water. At the current rate of progress, the world is still decades behind in fulfilling the completion of the MDGs. Passage of the *Jubilee Act* will greatly bolster efforts to get the international community back on track toward meeting these goals by 2015.

On April 3, 2008, the House Financial Services Committee approved of H.R. 2634 the *Jubilee Act*; the next step is consideration by the full House of Representatives which may occur as early as the week of April 7, 2008. We must encourage both the House and the Senate to act swiftly and send this bill to the President's desk for his signature as soon as possible.

More...

THE ACTION WE NEED YOU TO TAKE:

Contact both your Senators and your Representative **and URGE THEM TO SUPPORT H.R. 2634 / S. 2166 -- THE JUBILEE ACT FOR RESPONSIBLE LENDING AND EXPANDED DEBT CANCELLATION.** To contact your Senators and Representatives, you may:

✓ **Make a Phone Call:**

Call your Senators and Representative in Washington by dialing the Capitol Switchboard and asking to be transferred to their offices. The switchboard phone number is **(202) 224-3121** (see message section, below).

✓ **Write a Letter**

To write letters to your Senators, send them to:

The Honorable (name of Senator)

U.S. Senate

Washington, D.C. 20510

To write a letter to your Representative, send it to:

The Honorable (name of Representative)

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20515

**A SAMPLE
LETTER IS
ATTACHED**

✓ **Send a Fax**

If you would like to send a fax, call your Senators' and Representative's offices (through the Capitol switchboard) and ask for their fax numbers (you can use either the attached sample letter or the message box, below).

✓ **Send an E-Mail**

To send an e-mail to your Senators, go to www.senate.gov; click on "*Find Your Senators*". Look up your Senators by state; go to their web sites for e-mail addresses.

To send an e-mail to your Representative, go to www.house.gov, and click on "*Write Your Representative*" (on the left hand side, just under "find your Representative"). This will help you identify who your congressman is and how to contact him/her.

Unfortunately, not all Members of Congress have e-mail addresses.

THE MESSAGE

- ❖ The NAACP strongly supports the *Jubilee Act for Responsible Lending and Expanded Debt Cancellation of 2007*.
- ❖ The United States must work to help the poorest countries throughout the world eliminate debilitating debt which undermines their ability to provide basic human needs such food, housing, education, health care and infrastructure development for their people.
- ❖ The United States must use all available means, legislative, diplomatic and economic, to ensure that the Millennium Development Goals are achieved by 2015.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION TO THIS IMPORTANT MATTER!!!
If you have any questions, call Hilary Shelton at the Washington Bureau at (202) 463-2940.

MEMBERSHIP IS POWER! JOIN THE NAACP TODAY.

To become an NAACP member or to sign up for e-mail legislative and press updates, visit www.naacp.org

Sample Letter

(date)

The Honorable _____
United States House of Representatives / Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515 / 20510

**RE: SUPPORT FOR THE JUBILEE ACT FOR RESPONSIBLE
LENDING AND EXPANDED DEBT CANCELLATION ACT OF 2007,
H.R. 2634/S. 2166**

Dear Representative / Senator _____;

As a member of the NAACP, and leader in my community and your constituent I am very concerned about the debilitating debt that many countries throughout the world face. While debt is often a necessary tool used for a plethora of economic reasons, unmanageable debt can cripple a country, preventing it from meeting the most basic human needs of its people.

As a signatory to the Millennium Development Goals, the U.S. is charged with helping to alleviate poverty as well as promote education and health throughout the world. H.R. 2634 / S.2166, *the Jubilee Act for Responsible Lending and Expanded Debt Cancellation of 2007* would make great strides in freeing resources to achieve these goals through the forgiveness of debts. This crucial piece of legislation would help ease the overwhelming debt burden many countries face while making available funds for these nations to use to provide their citizens with vital resources and services. For example, in countries such as Burundi, Ghana, Honduras, Tanzania and Zambia, money saved from debt relief has been used to improve infrastructure, education, and health care and to increase access to daily necessities of life such as food and clean drinking water.

While these reports are certainly encouraging, more needs to be done. For example, in Sub-Saharan Africa, the approximate number of people living on less than a dollar a day has actually increased since 1990. If current trends are not reversed, Africa will be the only region in the world where there will be more poor people in 2015 than in 1990.

I urge you to support this legislation in every way you can. If you have already co-sponsored it, please ask your colleagues from your state delegations and related caucuses to join you as a co-sponsor, and do what you can to move the committee process forward as quickly as possible. If you have not co-sponsored the bill yet, please do so. And of course I hope you will oppose any efforts to weaken this bill.

Thank you so much for your attention to this urgent issue. Please contact me in the near future to let me know what you have done on this matter and what you believe I can do to help support debt relief.

Sincerely,
(sign and print your name and
remember to include your address)

Remember to contact your
Representative and BOTH
your Senators!