

## House Tax Reform Bill “unacceptable” As Written, Say U.s. Bishops Chairmen

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WASHINGTON—In a letter of November 9, Bishop Frank J. Dewane of Venice, Florida, Bishop Oscar Cantú of Las Cruces, New Mexico, and Bishop George V. Murry, SJ of Youngstown, Ohio called for amendments to the current draft of the House of Representatives tax reform bill “for the sake of families” and “for those struggling on the peripheries of society who have a claim on our national conscience.” “Doubling the standard deduction will help some of those in poverty to avoid tax liability, and this is a positive good contained in the bill,” wrote the Bishops of the *Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017*. “However, as written, this proposal appears to be the first federal income tax modification in American history that will raise income taxes on the working poor while simultaneously providing a large tax cut to the wealthy. This is simply unconscionable.” Bishop Dewane is the Chairman of the USCCB Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, Bishop Cantú chairs the Committee on International Justice and Peace, and Bishop Murry heads the Committee on Catholic Education. According to the nonpartisan congressional Joint Committee on Taxation (JCT), households with income of \$20,000 and \$40,000 per year will see their taxes raised in 2023, 2025, and again in 2027. Taxes will also increase on average taxpayers earning between \$10,000 and \$20,000 in 2025. At the same time, significant tax breaks to the very wealthy—including millionaires and billionaires—are projected for each year. The bishop-chairmen highlighted positive provisions in the areas of education and modest increases to child tax credits, but stressed that the bill places “new and unreasonable burdens on families,” and must be changed. Included among them are the elimination of: the adoption tax credit and adoption assistance program exclusion, the personal exemption (which will harm many larger families), the out-of-pocket medical expenses deduction, and incentives to employees and employers dependent care assistance or child care, among others. The letter also cautioned that the deficit could “be used as an argument to further restrict or end programs that help those in need, programs which are investments to help pull struggling families out of poverty.” Finally, the Bishops called for fixes to disincentives for charitable giving and affordable housing and community revitalization development projects that will result from the legislation. The full letter can be found at: [www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/federal-budget/upload/Tax-Cuts-and-Jobs-Act-Letter-11-9-2017.pdf](http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/federal-budget/upload/Tax-Cuts-and-Jobs-Act-Letter-11-9-2017.pdf).

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