



Time is running out for our families

PICO National Network is holding prayer events in the Senate and in cities across the United States on December 15 to press Congress to make the right choices on the federal budget and Gulf Coast recovery before members head home for Christmas recess:

- Congress should honor commitments to help protect and rebuild New Orleans and the Gulf Coast rather than leaving displaced families in limbo about their future.
- Congress should control Medicaid spending by reducing overpayments to drug and insurance not by putting six million children at risk of losing health care.

Protecting Children's Health: Congress faces a stark choice between a Senate budget which looks to pharmaceutical and insurance companies for health care savings and a House approach which puts the burden of \$6.5 billion in Medicaid cuts on children and families. Under the House budget, states would be allowed to charge new access fees and reduce benefits for six million children. These children would lose the right to preventive screening, wheel chairs, hearing aids; many would lose coverage when faced with access fees up to 5 percent of their family income.

PICO urges members of Congress to make the right budget choice by supporting the Senate approach to Medicaid which protects low-income children from harm.

Rebuilding Louisiana: Months after Katrina Congress is still debating whether to provide money to protect New Orleans and to help Gulf Coast families without flood insurance rebuild their homes. Half a million people were forced from their homes and saw everything they owned destroyed not by an "Act of God" but the failure of a levee system built by the Corps of Engineers. Insurance companies are refusing to pay claims in New Orleans on the ground that damage was done by flood not by Katrina, leaving hundreds of thousands of families with no way to rebuild.

PICO is asking Congress to pass a supplemental spending bill that includes funding to begin building category-5 levees (\$1.4 billion) and provide Community Development Block Grants to help families without flood insurance rebuild their homes (\$13 billion). By transferring unspent Iraq reconstruction funds to pay for Gulf Coast reconstruction this proposal will provide families and businesses with the confidence, access to credit and insurance and resources they need to begin rebuilding.

PICO is asking members to support a long-term funding source for coastal restoration that would come not from the federal budget but from oil and gas revenues from drilling off the Gulf Coast. Coastal restoration, estimated to cost \$14 billion, is essential because the destruction of barrier islands and wetlands destroyed the natural barriers that would have protected Southeastern Louisiana from Katrina.

PICO also invites members of Congress to come to Louisiana to see first hand the value of the region to the nation and its need at this time. According to the Times Picayune, just 24 of 100 Senators and 50 of 435 House members have visited south Louisiana since the hurricane, far fewer than have traveled the 6,000 miles to observe military operations in Iraq, or visited New York after 9/11.