

**AMERICAN BAPTIST
RESOLUTION ON WELFARE AND HUMAN SERVICES**

Holy Scripture teaches us that both individually and as a nation we are blessed (Ps. 41:1) or judged (Amos 8) according to how we protect the poor and vulnerable of our society. Our Lord himself showed his disciples (Luke 10:25-37; 16:19-31) that at the heart of the Kingdom of God is a deep regard for the welfare of the least of our brothers and sisters. In like manner, at the heart of our Lord's ministry and ours as disciples is the commission to "preach Good News to the poor." Such good news requires a concern for justice and mercy in temporal matters as well as a concern for the spiritual. An estimated 34.6 million Americans were still living in poverty in 2002.¹ In this situation of despair federal anti-poverty programs have been the major social instruments for both amelioration of and escape from the shackles of poverty. Serious questions have been raised concerning the adequacy of the nation's "safety net" of social programs as well as the ability of the tax cuts to make a positive impact on poverty in the United States. As the General Board of the American Baptist Churches we, therefore:

1. Reaffirm our commitment to the principle that governments, like individuals, are accountable to God and should be just and humane in providing for the needs of the poor and the vulnerable;
2. Restate our historic support of "...programs that develop the physical environment, institutions, and the lives of persons threatened by the destructive effects of poverty;"²
3. Urge the federal government to provide a program of public welfare with national standards tied to the cost of living which recognizes the relative capacity of the federal, state, county and local governments to participate;
4. Oppose cutbacks in social programs and human services;
5. Call upon Congress and the Administration to renew the nation's commitment to the elimination of poverty and hunger as an essential national priority;
6. Encourage and support officials in governmental and private agencies in their just efforts to decrease fraud and abuse in all federal programs, including military programs, in order that national resources might be optimally used;

7. Urge Congress and the Administration to reform and strengthen the delivery of aid and resources for the poor;

8. Call upon Congress and the Administration to recognize the special problems of the disabled and the elderly poor and to devise better safeguards for the dwindling resources of these groups;

9. Urge Congress and the Administration to provide improved job training programs for the hard-core unemployed--especially minority youths, that will correct past abuses, waste, and inefficiencies, and to commit national funds sufficient to support such programs;

¹According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Poverty in the United States, 2002.

²Economic Justice-National, 1969 Resolution.

10. Call upon Congress to support tax policy which rewards investments in productive capacity that is designed to create jobs for the less skilled among the unemployed;

11. Urge private industry and unions to create training programs and entry-level positions with the purpose of hiring and advancing the hard-core unemployed;

12. Call on all levels of government to provide fair inducements and incentives to industry to hire and train the disadvantaged;

13. Urge our congregations and members to support even more generously the denominational programs which respond to the needs of the poor;

14. Urge American Baptist regional administrative organizations and denominationally-related agencies to monitor and respond to the impact of the cutbacks in social welfare programs upon the poor;

15. Encourage our member congregations to minister on a local level to the immediate physical needs of the poor which occur as a result of government social welfare cutbacks; and

16. Call upon our member congregations to oppose the concept of block grants precisely because categorical grants³ were enacted to bring equity in human service delivery among the states.

³Funds specified for specific program.

Adopted by the General Board of the American Baptist Churches, June 1981
114 For, 37 Against, 5 Abstentions
Modified by the Executive Committee of the General Board - March 1992
Modified by the Executive Committee of the General Board – September 2004
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POLICY BASE

American Baptist Policy Statement on Human Rights

As American Baptists we will support programs and measures to assure these rights:

2. The right to the basic necessities of food, shelter, clothing and health care.

American Baptist Policy Statement on Hunger

A) As American Baptists we shall support programs to alleviate hunger and malnutrition within the United States.

B) We urge that as U.S. Government programs are formulated, either domestic or international, the cost of such programs be borne in such a way that the American poor do not bear an inequitable portion of the cost.

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