

# Coalition takes aim at reducing poverty in the U.S. and globally

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WASHINGTON (ABP)—More than 1,000 faith leaders and activists are expected to descend on Washington soon in what planners say is one of largest and most diverse coalitions ever to fight against domestic and global poverty.

Jim Wallis, president and founder of Sojourners, a lead sponsor of the [Mobilization to End Poverty](#) initiative scheduled April 26-29, said Christians of all stripes have been coming together for some time around the issue of reducing poverty.

“This is now a unifying call for many of us,” Wallis said. “This is a concern that brings us all together.”

The coalition will ask Congress to preserve priorities in President Obama’s budget that assist low-income communities in the United States, with emphasis on health care, energy and education, Wallis said.

It also will call on Obama, who has been invited to speak, to renew his commitment to implement the Millennium Development Goals aimed at cutting extreme global poverty in half by 2015.

The coalition is deeply concerned about debate over the budget—the first in a long time that puts reducing poverty at center stage, Wallis noted.

It is time for the “faith community to be heard” in the national debate over budget priorities, he insisted.

“We’re all unified that what happens to poor people is for us a matter of faith,” Wallis said.

“The moral authority of the faith community is on the line here, and we’re getting behind the effort to put poor people back on the agenda.”

Also supporting the effort is Rep. James Clyburn, D-S.C., House majority whip.

Clyburn, a preacher’s son who as a student was headed to seminary before switching to law, said the budget being debated actually is designed to reduce the deficit by improving Americans’ economic conditions.

“The one problem that we are experiencing is that so many people are focusing on these deficits and how that will play back in their districts, and they’re not really focusing on the fact that what we are doing will in fact reduce the deficit over a five-year period,” Clyburn said.

“We must all be active advocates for reducing poverty and for making sure that we address the issues on behalf of the poor.”

Other sponsors of the mobilization are World Vision, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the ONE campaign, Oxfam, Wesley Theological Seminary, Convoy of Hope and National Ministries of the American Baptist Churches USA.

ABC National Ministries Executive Director Aidsand Wright-Riggins said recently his organization “boldly joins arms” with the other lead partners in the movement.

Since its founding in 1832 as The American Baptist Home Mission Societies, he said, one of National Ministries’ top mission priorities “has been to address the needs of those living at the margins of our society who are so vulnerable to socioeconomic variables that can render them destitute.”

Thirty “outreach partners” supporting the initiative include the Cooperative

Baptist Fellowship. In 2007 the CBF Coordinating Council endorsed the Millennium Development Goals, eight challenges adopted by 189 nations and signed by 147 heads of state at the U.N. Millennial Summit in 2000.

The goals, with 21 quantifiable targets measured by 60 indicators, are to, by 2015:

- *Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.*
- *Achieve universal primary education.*
- *Promote gender equality and empower women.*
- *Reduce child mortality.*
- *Improve maternal health.*
- *Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.*
- *Ensure environmental sustainability*
- *Develop a Global Partnership for Development.*