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***Congress Approves FY 2010 Budget Resolution***

On April 2, both the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate passed their fiscal year 2010 budget resolutions. The Senate passed its measure by a vote of 55 to 43, while the House adopted its version by a vote of 233 to 196, primarily along party lines. Both resolutions closely track President Obama's FY 2010 request, with minor differences in policy and spending priorities; the Senate provides \$3.5 trillion in spending and the House \$3.6 trillion. Both chambers had spirited and partisan discussions during the debate on Thursday. In the House, Republicans attempted to pass an alternative budget, which aimed to significantly reduce the president's request. In the Senate, Republican leaders did not offer a separate budget, but offered a number of failed amendments to reduce the president's request and provide more tax breaks.

The two chambers will meet after the spring recess to iron out differences between the two bills. One of the major issues that will be considered is the inclusion of "reconciliation instructions" from the House-passed version. This procedural measure would limit debate in the Senate and require a simple majority to pass health care and student aid policy reforms. The reconciliation provision has received a great deal of opposition from most Republicans and some Democrats in the Senate.

While the final budget resolution is non-binding and will not require presidential signature, it provides the blueprint for authorizing committees and appropriators to make key spending decisions on various federal programs.

For more information on the Senate version, [go here](#).

To read more on the House version, [go here](#).

For more information, please contact Desmond Brown, Senior Director of Government Affairs, [dbrown@catholiccharitiesusa.org](mailto:dbrown@catholiccharitiesusa.org).

***Congress Sends Community Service Bill to the President***

On March 31, the U.S. House of Representatives passed legislation to expand national volunteer service programs by a vote of 275 to 149. The "Serve America Act" (H.R. 1388), previously passed by the Senate on March 26, now awaits President Obama's signature.

At an estimated cost of \$5.7 billion over five years, the “Serve America Act” will:

- Grow the number of AmeriCorps volunteers from 75,000 to 250,000
- Increase education rewards to \$5350
- Provide incentives for middle and high school students to engage in service
- Recognize and support universities engaged in service
- Create green and other new service corps to meet key needs in low-income communities
- Expand service opportunities for older Americans and public-private partnerships
- Build a nationwide service infrastructure through community-building investments and social entrepreneurship

Current law bans the use of Corporation funds ([42 USC 12634](#)) for religious, political, and union activity, but does not bar the entire organization from participating in those activities. The final version of the bill contains restrictions on the types of activities for which national service positions can be used, however nonprofit organizations would be able to use their own funds to advocate for causes in which they believe.

The bill also includes an amendment for nonprofit capacity building. It sets up a grant program in the [Corporation for National and Community Service](#) to expand organizational development assistance to small and midsize nonprofit organizations.

To read more, [go here](#).

For more information, please contact Kellyann McClain, Policy Analyst, [kmcclain@catholiccharitiesusa.org](mailto:kmcclain@catholiccharitiesusa.org).

### ***Unemployment Rises to 8.5 Percent***

On April 3, the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics released the most recent unemployment numbers. In March, the number of unemployed persons increased by 694,000, for a total of 13.2 million unemployed workers. The national unemployment rate increased to 8.5 percent, up from 8.1 percent in February. Over the past year, 5.3 million jobs have been lost. The March unemployment numbers continue the staggering trend of job loss over the past five months, with 3.3 million jobs disappearing since November of 2008.

More information on the recent unemployment data is [available here](#).

For more information, please contact Kellyann McClain, Policy Analyst, [kmcclain@catholiccharitiesusa.org](mailto:kmcclain@catholiccharitiesusa.org).

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Catholic Charities USA

Sixty-Six Canal Center Plaza, Suite 600, Alexandria, VA 22314

[socialpolicy@catholiccharitiesusa.org](mailto:socialpolicy@catholiccharitiesusa.org)

For information about advocacy, please contact

Lucreda Cobbs at (703) 236-6243 or [lcobbs@catholiccharitiesusa.org](mailto:lcobbs@catholiccharitiesusa.org).