



An Open Letter to Members of the United States Congress
From UUA President Rev. William Sinkford September 6, 2007

To Members of the United States Congress:

I write to you today with a heavy heart. Our national crisis has become spiritual crisis, and as a religious leader, I am called to urge to you once again to consider the true cost of the war in Iraq.

On March 12th of this year, I sent you a Moral Balance Sheet, which, at that time, mourned the loss of 3,100 soldiers and assessed the \$400 billion dollars spent in Iraq. I urged you not to spend another American dollar on this war until plans were in place for a speedy and just end to the conflict. Such plans were never made, and in the past six months 600 more American soldiers have died, and another \$78 billion has been lost. The most heartbreaking development since March is that there is no longer any light at the end of the tunnel. Things are worse now for everyone in Iraq, and civilian deaths have sky-rocketed in an escalating cycle of violence. This moral quagmire is of our own creation, and it has placed a heavy burden on our nation's conscience.

Millions of Americans believe that the war has failed the Iraqi people and that we have failed ourselves as well, by sacrificing so much to prolong the conflict. Like me, countless people of conscience are praying for a way out of this tragedy.

Not far from the collapsed 35W bridge in Minneapolis is a yard sign that reads, "Bridges Not Bombs." The entire transportation budget for the state of Minnesota is \$250 million. For the \$78 billion spent in Iraq since March, the federal government could allocate six times that amount to every state in the nation to improve their transportation infrastructure. While we fight a losing war abroad, Americans at home are at increasing risk.

This July I was pleased to celebrate your success in raising the minimum wage by \$0.70. But there is so much yet to be done to assist working families. The \$78 billion spent in Iraq could have provided our 1.7 million minimum wage workers with a truly just living wage, with enough left over to enroll their families in health insurance -- the same high quality plan you receive as a US Congressperson.

Another ever-present stress on our working families is the cost of childcare. \$78 billion would provide 30 weeks of care for every child between 0 and 4 years old. Those 21 million Americans are our future.

This September you will hear a report from the administration about the progress in Iraq, and you will be asked to appropriate more funding for this continuing tragedy. As you deliberate, please be mindful of the chaos and resentment that grows every day in Iraq, as the death tolls continue to break records. Please consider all the urgent needs in our own country that go unmet. And, in memory of our fallen soldiers, please act now to end this hopeless war.

I pray that you will find the courage and the will to end this tragedy.

Not another dollar. Not another life.

Sincerely,

Rev. William G. Sinkford

For more information about the UUA's Moral Balance Campaign visit www.uua.org/socialjustice or contact the UUA Washington Office for Advocacy at LA_International@uua.org or (202) 296-4672 ext. 21.