

Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (<https://www.ncronline.org>)

January 29, 2013 at 8:27pm

Budgets are about Values

by John McCarthy

NCR Today

Budgets are about priorities?and they should reflect the values of the people who make them. The legislation that was passed to avoid our fiscal cliff put many spending decisions off until March 1st. Many religious organizations are using this time to encourage Congress to cut Pentagon budgets and support the programs that aid those living on the margins of society. The Sisters of Mercy have put together an incredibly brief and succinct letter-to-the-editor that I thought was worth sharing. Their letter to the editor can be found below. Please sign up for their news-letter for important news relating to social justice.

To the Editor:

I am concerned that our federal budget is not reflecting the values that make us a thriving society. Instead, nearly 60 percent of the discretionary budget is now directed toward an incredibly narrow definition of security---the Pentagon budget and other military-related spending. I pray that Congress listens to military experts who are calling for sensible cuts to Pentagon spending in its next deficit agreement package.

For instance, Brig. General John Johns and Lt. General Robert Gard recently stated that, "Cutting Pentagon spending recognizes that national security is more than military power. The U.S. is stronger with a strong economy, sustainable jobs, investment in education, renewal of our infrastructure and a sensible energy strategy. Continuing to waste money when our nation should have other priorities is bad policy and bad for security."

Since the 1990s, which are remembered as an economic heyday, U.S. military spending has doubled -- beginning well before the events of September 11, 2001. In fact, the Pentagon routinely struggles to spend all the money it is allocated, and ended FY12 with \$100 billion in unused funding sitting in its bank accounts waiting to be spent. Yet the Pentagon remains the only part of the federal budget not subject to audit, with documented levels of waste that far outpace the entire budgets of critical human needs programs.

Let's bring our Pentagon spending back to the pre-war levels of 2002 and make needed investments in job creation, education, healthcare, and the environment.

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