

Christian Leaders Endorse Part of Budget Deal

A coalition of diverse Christian leaders working together to help hungry and poor people in the U.S. praised congressional negotiators for including key anti-poverty provisions in this week's spending and tax agreements.

The Circle of Protection had called on Congress to make previous improvements to the Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit permanent. They declared the passage of a bill making that happen a "major victory" for low-income working families.

"The EITC and CTC together lift more people out of poverty than any other program in the U.S. besides Social Security," Circle of Protection said in an official statement Wednesday afternoon. "Making these EITC and CTC provisions permanent will prevent 16 million people from falling into or deeper into poverty."

Additionally, the organization praised the omnibus bill for increasing funding for children's programs such as Head Start, while providing alternative access to food during the summer months. The bill also increases funding for international food aid and maternal and child health and nutrition, and continued funding to build long-term agriculture sustainability.

The spending bill also excluded a provision to increase subsidies to the world's largest shipping companies to ship food aid. Circle of Protection said the provision could have resulted in up to 2 million people losing U.S. food aid and increasing transportation costs to taxpayers by \$75 million.

"This fall, the Circle of Protection delivered a list of five "must-do" items for Congress to accomplish before the end of 2015," the organization said in its official statement. "If

the EITC and CTC improvements become permanent, Congress will have acted on three of these five must-do items. The other two items Congress accomplished are avoiding brinksmanship and passing a budget that responsibly addressed sequestration without further burdening poor and vulnerable Americans.”

The organization’s leaders are still urging lawmakers to pass the Global Food Security Act and a child nutrition bill.