



Social Safety Net

The Rabbinical Assembly has passed numerous resolutions on the social safety net over the years. In 2005 we passed an omnibus resolution reaffirming many of these stands. Most of the Jewish sources and philosophical bases for these resolutions were articulated in *You Shall Strengthen Them* by Elliot Dorff, a joint publication of the RA and USCJ edited by the RA Social Action Committee.

In several resolutions the Rabbinical Assembly has expressed the idea that the federal budget should not be balanced on the backs of the poor, especially during a recessionary economy. The Rabbinical Assembly has opposed a constitutional amendment to balance the federal budget. The Rabbinical Assembly asserts that the federal government has a pivotal role to ensure the safety net of basic services for all human beings and assistance to needy families (1995, 1996, 1997, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2005, 2009). The Rabbinical Assembly has also supported job training and tax incentives for businesses to provide healthcare and child care, especially to its low-wage employees.

A 1964 resolution called for a “common effort by all federal, state and local agencies against mass unemployment, illiteracy, slums and other inequities in our society.” In 1984 and 1990 the RA advocated for the use of government resources to alleviate problems such as homelessness, and affirmed a need for greater allocation of resources to such an effect. The Rabbinical Assembly also supports federal assistance in stimulating the creation of jobs and increased federal contributions to state budgets so that states can provide basic services to its residents (1995). In 1997 the RA saluted “religious and nonsectarian groups who do so much to ease the burden of the poor while government continues to cut back its assistance to the most vulnerable members of American society.”

The Rabbinical Assembly has opposed federal tax cuts in several resolutions (2000, 2003, 2005). It opposed the elimination of the Estate Tax (although it was not in the resolution, there was extensive support for a generous upper limit exemption, i.e. \$5 million). It also opposed the Corporate Dividend Tax Credit, the result of which would have hurt services to the poor. In 1982 and 1985 the RA protested cuts in social services for the underprivileged and disenfranchised.

In 2002 the Rabbinical Assembly passed a resolution on health care for the poor, calling for federal government to increase funding of Medicaid, expand health care for low-income Americans, expand CHIP, and urge the states to expand SCHIP to include parents of the covered children and to subsidize COBRA for those who lose their jobs. In 2008 the RA called upon federal, local and state governments to establish affordable health care. In 2011 the RA passed a resolution supporting the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010, and in the 2012 “Resolution Affirming the Need for Socio-Economic Justice in Federal Budget Prioritization in the US” the RA reiterated the need to ensure “continued benefits for a range of social services including Medicare, Medicaid, nutrition assistance (SNAP), [and] child health care (CHIP)” for those in need.

The Rabbinical Assembly has a long history of supporting the expansion of government benefit programs to include all Americans. In 1950 the RA passed a resolution encouraging the government to “[expand] social security rights to those groups not now covered under previous legislation,” which was followed by a 1952 resolution favoring the extension of the National Social Security law to cover



clergymen, and resolutions in 1960 and 1962 supporting the expansion of medical care and social security for the aged.

In 1997, the Rabbinical Assembly passed a resolution to strengthen the Social Security system in the United States and called for an increase in the payroll tax to fund this increase. In 2005, the Rabbinical Assembly opposed the privatization of Social Security and reaffirmed its commitment to the necessity of raising the Social Security tax.