

is that radical group known as the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, a set of groups in local communities that, to quote them, "pray at each meeting that families and those who have no home quickly may find a place in which they can live a decent and happy life."

Here is what this subversive organization of deeply religious people dedicated to trying to help the poor have to say:

"Our members live in communities across the country. They serve individuals and families with no homes, families on the verge of homelessness. We see what they are going through. Many Councils of the Society provide shelter and housing for the poor. The poor need a voice just as much as Americans who have the financial ability to own their own homes. They, too, should be allowed the privilege to register to vote, regardless of where they live; and nonprofits should not be penalized for providing them an opportunity to do so."

COUNCIL OF THE UNITED STATES,  
SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL,  
St. Louis, MO, November 2, 2005.

Hon. BARNEY FRANK,  
Rayburn HOB, Washington, DC.

DEAR REP. FRANK: As National President of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul representing 116,000 members across the United States in 4,000 parishes, I urge you to:

1. Support the Affordable Housing Fund in the GSE legislation (H.R. 1461), but without restricting an organization's right to engage in voter registration.

2. Oppose any language that restricts voter registration and freedom of affiliation by non-profit and public organizations when using their own funds.

3. Tell House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-IL) and Financial Service Chairman Mike Oxley (R-OH) to reject these restrictions and bring the bill to the floor for a vote without this language.

Members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul pray at each meeting "that families and those who have no home may quickly find a place in which they can live a decent and happy life." I ask that you help us to continue to make this a reality.

It is our belief that it is the right of every American to vote. Access to the privilege to register to vote should not be conditioned upon where people live or what their financial condition is. Nonprofit organizations such as the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, work tirelessly to serve the poor. It is irresponsible to hold organizations hostage by this restrictive measure that impinges on the rights of poor Americans and upon those who seek to help give a face and a voice to the many that are voiceless. We see from the recent tragedies in the south that there are many poor and today many more homeless who need shelter. Adding such limitations on those who are trying so hard to help is wrong.

The Society has been serving the poor in America for over 150 years. Our members live in communities across the country. They regularly visit and serve individuals and families with no homes, families on the verge of homelessness, and families who live in hazardous and substandard conditions. We see what they are going through. Many Councils of the Society provide shelter and housing for the poor. The poor need a voice just as much as Americans who have the financial ability to afford their own homes.

They, too, should be allowed the privilege to register to vote regardless of where they live, and nonprofits should not be penalized for providing them an opportunity to do so.

Sincerely,

JOSEPH FLANNIGAN,  
National President,  
Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

#### SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

□ 1330

#### ASSURED FUNDING FOR VETERANS HEALTH CARE ACT OF 2005

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BASS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, this is the week upon which the Nation will solemnly recognize the holiday known as Veterans Day, a day out of the year when we should pause to recognize the sacrifice of those 25 million who have served our Nation and the 2.2 million people serving today in uniform, many on the front lines in Iraq, Afghanistan, or in other hot spots around the world.

This is not the only day in which we should recognize the sacrifice that those who have served in the past have given or the current sacrifice of the veterans and the active-duty military and their families, but we should do that every day. And the way Congress could do that best would be to assure veterans that the United States Government will keep its promises, promises that were made to them and their families at the time of enlistment.

Unfortunately, we have fallen short. Until this year the administration had consistently underfunded veterans' benefits, and in fact, even earlier this year the President's proposed budget would have claimed a substantial increase in health care funding for veterans, but actually would have done that by taxing veterans with a \$250 enrollment fee for 2.2 million veterans and doubling the prescription drug copayment. It was not too many years ago that we had no required copayment for veterans. We should return to that time for vets in need.

These are quotes from the Veterans of Foreign Wars; since we do not want this to be a partisan issue, let us quote from a nonpartisan group about the President's budget:

"This budget will cause veterans health care to be delayed and may result in the return of 6-month-long waiting periods. That is especially shameful during a time of war." This is from the VFW, February 7, 2005.

"The message that this budget communicates is that part of the Federal Government deficit will be balanced on the back of military veterans," he said,

"because it's clear that the proper funding of veterans health care and other programs is not an administration policy." Again, a quote from the VFW.

The American Legion, same day: "'This is not acceptable,' said Thomas P. Cadmus, national commander. 'It's nothing more than a health care tax designed to increase revenue at the expense of veterans who served their country.' He went on to say that during his visits to VA hospitals, he had not run into Bill Gates, Donald Trump, or Ross Perot seeking care. He sees mostly veterans, many on small fixed incomes, trying to make ends meet and exercising their very best health care option, Cadmus observed.

"No active-duty servicemember in harm's way should ever have to question the Nation's commitment to veterans. This is the wrong message at the wrong time to the wrong constituent." Again, the commander of the American Legion.

Why is the Republican-led Congress not listening to that? This week they are going to struggle mightily to cut programs important to middle-income families, student loans and other programs. Then, in the near future, they are going to struggle mightily to pass \$70 billion of new tax cuts for people who earn over \$300,000 a year. But are they going to struggle or are they even going to allow a vote here on the floor of the House of Representatives on H.R. 515, the Assured Funding for Veterans Health Care Act?

There is no better way that the elected Representatives could celebrate Veterans Day here in the United States than by bringing up and passing this legislation that would, for all future budgets, assure that there would be adequate funding for veterans. They are already threatening a 2 percent across-the-board cut on that side of the aisle after they do the tax cuts for the rich people, because then we will be having to increase the size of the deficit despite the cuts to middle- and low-income programs, and that, of course, would hit hard again on veterans' programs.

We need assurances that that is not going to happen again. We need to properly recognize their service. The pay raises for Members of Congress, those are going forward in the House, although I oppose them. But somehow we cannot get the additional funding and the assured funding we need for our Nation's veterans.

Please, to the leadership, my Republican colleagues, and those on my side of the aisle, let us not just go home and march in the parades and tell people we are with the veterans. Let us demonstrate that with a vote of support on assured funding, mandatory funding, for every future budget year so that we will not go through these future struggles.

I have had too many calls from too many veterans to my district office where we have tried to help them get