



An International Network for Peace, Justice and Life

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## Consistent Life Recommendations to Obama-Biden Transition Team

### *Who We Are*

Consistent Life is a network of 200 organizations and many more individuals committed to the protection of life, which is threatened in today's world by war, abortion, poverty, racism, capital punishment and euthanasia. Our individual endorsers include Nobel Peace Prize winners, religious leaders from a variety of faith traditions, and activists for a variety of causes. We are based in the United States, but include some organizations and individuals from a variety of other nations.

### *Overriding Principle*

We ask that the Obama-Biden Administration consider this question when reviewing options for policies in all areas: Would this policy enhance the dignity, affirm the worth and increase the well-being of humans at all stages of life and in all circumstances?

### *Policy Suggestions*

- **Change National Priorities.** Today the United States devotes over half of its discretionary budget to supporting current wars and a military posture prepared for future wars. This country devotes more resources to the military than all other countries combined. While the United States is #1 in military power, it has fallen farther and farther behind other advanced economies in most indicators of health and well-being. While we maintain a massive military force with over 700 major bases in other countries, many people at home and abroad face inadequate diets, substandard housing, lack of access to clean potable water, and lack of adequate medical care. Our priorities are skewed. We need to focus our resources on those things that enhance life, not on those that involve the destruction of life. Rep. Barney Frank has proposed a 25% reduction in military spending. This would be a good start in changing our national priorities. It would be change we can believe in.
- **Non-military Approaches to International Issues.** In the last few decades, citizens in dozens of countries have mobilized against tyranny and injustice using nonviolent approaches, producing meaningful positive change in their countries. These unarmed movements have proven much more effective at bringing about change which helps ordinary citizens than armed groups, while minimizing death and injuries. At the same time, nongovernmental groups like Peace Brigades International, Nonviolent Peaceforce and Christian Peacemaker Teams have sent unarmed people into conflict situations to accompany those in danger, promote dialogue and defuse tensions. While they have had only very minimal resources, they have had a positive effect in several nations. They demonstrate the potential for unarmed international intervention in countries

experiencing conflict and tyranny. We suggest the United States devote resources to developing a cadre of trained men and women who would be available for unarmed intervention in trouble spots, and that it advocate at the United Nations for development of an international program of unarmed intervention.

- **Stop Funding Armed Conflicts Abroad.** The United States is currently the world's largest arms supplier. U.S.-supplied weapons have been used in numerous international and civil wars, often on both sides. We suggest an end to providing other nations and movements with the means of war. We propose that all foreign aid be non-military, focused on development and relief which improves the conditions of those without adequate food, clean water, housing and medical care.
- **Admit Past Wrong Policies.** The United States needs to openly acknowledge and express regret for past actions which have interfered with those in other nations choosing their own leadership and approaches to issues. For example, in 1953, the United States was instrumental in supporting a military coup in Iran toppling the democratic government. We continue to live with the consequences of that evil act today. If the United States would offer a public apology for its misdeeds in Iran, that would create a better atmosphere for dialogue with Iranians today.
- **Close WHINSEC.** We urge the prompt closing of the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC), formerly known as the School of the Americas. This Institute has trained many of the worst violators of human rights in the Americas, and is therefore complicit in a number of extrajudicial killings, torture and other violations of the rights of citizens in the Americas. Closing WHINSEC would signal a new, more positive course in the Americas for the Obama Administration.
- **Oppose Forced Abortions.** We urge opposition to forced abortions in China and elsewhere. No funding should go to governmental or nongovernmental organizations which cooperate with such programs. Abortion should also not be forced indirectly upon women, as may happen when abortion is legalized under conditions of gender inequality (where males are the actual decision-makers).
- **No Forced Legalization of Abortion.** Vulnerable nations should not be forced to accept an international "right" to abortion likely to be used against their female citizens, as well as against their indigenous democracies and cultures.
- **Support Women Having Children.** President-Elect Obama was instrumental in including in the Democratic Party platform that the Party "strongly supports a woman's decision to have a child by ensuring access to and availability of programs for pre and post natal health care, parenting skills, income support, and caring adoption programs." This provision should be implemented by supporting such legislation as the Pregnant Women Support Act and the Elizabeth Cady Stanton Pregnant and Parenting Student Services Act.
- **No FOCA.** The majority of states have enacted legislation providing various protections and safeguards relative to abortion. The so-called Freedom of Choice Act threatens to invalidate these democratically approved protections. The Supreme Court has upheld the Constitutionality of such provisions. We urge that that Freedom of Choice Act not be enacted.
- **No Government Pressure on Low-Income Women to Abort.** Since pregnancies are caused not by the behavior of just one person but by two people, as long as male domination in sexual relationships is still common the availability of government funding

for abortions means that women are more often pressured in sexual interactions they would prefer not to have or for which they are not prepared for pregnancy prevention. As long as society maintains a prejudice against those with disabilities and a disdain for the needs of those with low incomes, there will also be other people who will pressure women into abortions they don't want or about which they feel ambivalent. Therefore, the government funding which is intended to be helpful can in a large number of cases in reality be quite cruel.

- **Consider the Poor and Disadvantaged.** We urge the Obama Administration to consider the effect on the poor and disadvantaged, at home and abroad, in making all policy decisions. The Administration should propose and support policies that would improve the conditions of the poor and disadvantaged.
- **Abolish the Death Penalty.** The death penalty is viewed as barbaric by much of the civilized world. It sends a message that killing is an appropriate response to social problems. The death penalty's finality means that recompense could not be provided to persons improperly convicted, and the death penalty has a long record of being used in a discriminatory manner. We urge the ending of the death penalty for all Federal offenses, and encouragement to states to end the death penalty for state offenses.

### **Conclusion**

This is a time of opportunity. The American people appear to be ready for positive change. We urge the Obama Administration to take advantage of this opportunity to address issues such as those named above.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bill Samuel".

Bill Samuel, President  
Consistent Life  
On behalf of the Consistent Life Board  
December 11, 2008