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The Christian Recorder News Break – October 15, 2013 - Social Action Commission African Methodist Episcopal Church tells Congress “End the Shutdown Now: It's A Moral Issue!”

(Los Angeles) The African Methodist Episcopal Church joins with the overwhelming majority of American citizens all across this country, in expressing both our disappointment and frustration with the shutdown of the United States government due to the failure of Congress to pass a continuing budget bill funding government operations. “The AME Church sees this as a moral issue based upon its harm to citizens, including members of the AME Church,” proclaims the AME Social Action Commission chair, Bishop Reginald T. Jackson.

More than our frustration and disappointment with the shutdown is the attempt by a minority of members of the House of Representatives, to hold the President and the people of the United States, hostage to their demand that the president agree to withhold funding for the Affordable Healthcare Act for a year. The Affordable Healthcare Act was passed by both Houses of Congress, signed by the President and upheld by the United States Supreme Court; it is the law of the land. More than forty times, Republican members of Congress have tried to defund the Healthcare Act. Enough Already! This attempt to blackmail and hold hostage the United States for their ideological obsession is irresponsible and a violation of their oath to uphold the Constitution of the United States.

Fortunately, not all Republicans are supportive of this charade and manipulation of government. There are enough votes of Democrats and Republicans to pass a "clean budget bill" if House Speaker John Boehner will allow the bill to be put up for a vote in the House of Representatives. Speaker Boehner insists that the President call and negotiate with him and other Congressional leaders on a continuing budget bill. President Obama has refused and we support his position. Funding for the Affordable Healthcare Act should not be subject to negotiations or "blackmail," it is law and has nothing to do with the continuing budget bill. After the budget bill is approved, the President has said he will negotiate spending cuts to reduce the national debt. The Affordable Healthcare Act is the signature achievement of this President and the effort of Tea Party Republicans to defund it is nothing more than a cynical attempt to undo this historic achievement and also to deny healthcare access to more than 50 million Americans, a large number of whom are African Americans. The United States, the wealthiest nation in the world is the only industrialized nation in the world that does not provide its citizens with healthcare. For more than seventy-years, U.S. Presidents have tried to achieve it, but only this President was able to get it done; and we congratulate him and urge him to stand tall and strong against this effort to blackmail him and to hold the country hostage.

We call upon House Speaker John Boehner to exercise courage and moral leadership and not allow "Tea Party" Republicans to hold him hostage. He should demonstrate leadership and post the budget bill for a vote. His failure to lead is causing hardship for hundreds of thousands of federal employees, threatens to slow the recovery of our economy, puts our national security at risk, impacts millions of Americans who rely on the government for services; has closed parks and monuments and has tarnished the image and stature of the United States around the world.

We call upon House Speaker Boehner to post the continuing budget bill for a vote so that negotiations can begin immediately to increase the nation's debt ceiling so that the United States does not go into default for the first time in the nation's history. This must be done by October 17th.

This is a moment that requires those elected to leadership positions to lead. President Obama is willing to negotiate, but he needs a partner. We call on Speaker Boehner to rise to the moment and join him. The nation is watching and waiting.

Bishop Reginald T. Jackson, Chair
Jacquelyn Dupont-Walker, Director, Social Action Commission
