Week #306: When lawmakers discuss cutting social services budgets, they often say that faith organizations will step in and meet the needs of those living in poverty. Do you feel your congregation could do more to help the poor or are you already stretched thin? What challenges would your congregation have to overcome to provide more charity?

(Due 8 a.m. Monday, Nov. 10. Prints Nov. 16.)

The responsibility for the common good and the welfare of all people belongs primarily with the civil government. It provides health and safety laws and regulations and must first protect those most vulnerable and most in danger of harm. It is incongruous that the civil government would abandon those in critical need to the charity of just religious people. In emergencies and tragedies, local, state and federal agencies, designed for emergency aid purposes, respond quickly and we hope adequately to alleviate the human suffering and deadly danger that result. To expect local congregations to be the sole response is both naïve and cruel. No congregation has the financial aid or trained personnel to provide the relief that is needed. At best, they can provide moral support and encouragement, act as a source of volunteer efforts, and advocate for adequate resources. We are all stretched extremely thin right now.

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