

AFRICAN AMERICAN RELIGIOUS LEADERS AFFIRM COMMITMENT TO THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

October 21, 2013

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We, leaders of predominantly African American denominations and other faith leaders, who lead millions of African American people of faith, believe that our devotion to God requires us to be actively involved in promoting the well being of all people.

We find these instructional words in the Holy Bible:

Old Testament: *1 The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners,² To proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn,³ And provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor.*

Isaiah 61:1-3 (NIV)

New Testament: *¹⁶ This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. ¹⁷ If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? ¹⁸ Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.*

1 John 3:16-18 (NIV)

In some cases, we can best accomplish that objective by executing clearly defined, focused collaborative efforts amongst denominations and other faith based groups. We believe in those cases we can accomplish more together than we can separately.

The issue of providing all Americans with access to quality health care is one of those issues. We believe that access to quality health care is a fundamental civil and human

right in America. Historically, over seven million African Americans have been uninsured and denied access to care with devastating consequences. The Affordable Care Act provides African Americans, along with Americans of all nationalities, access to desperately needed quality health care.

We affirm our support for the Affordable Care Act. We understand that over time aspects of the Act will be revised as government learns more and to-be-expected administrative glitches will be appropriately addressed but it is essential that we work aggressively with what we have right now. We cannot afford to put this off any longer. Any further delay will have catastrophic effects on the nation's uninsured.

Additionally, we have pledged to work together to:

- Facilitate the critical enrollment numbers necessary to ensure the success of the Affordable Care Act, and,
- Seek other opportunities to work towards improving the health status of our constituencies e.g. Health and Wellness Sundays which will include thematic preaching on specified Sundays along with other related activities.

In support of this truly interfaith effort, we affix our names, with organizations listed for identification purposes only:

The Reverend Dr. Otis Moss, Jr.

Chair, Faith Partnerships, Inc.

The Reverend Dr. Barbara Williams-Skinner

Co-Chair, National African American Clergy Network

The Reverend Dr. T. DeWitt Smith, Jr.

Co-Chair, National African American Clergy Network

The Reverend Dr. Carroll A. Baltimore

President, Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc.

Bishop George E. Battle, Jr.

Senior Bishop, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church

Bishop Charles Edward Blake, Sr.

Presiding Bishop and Chief Apostle, Church of God In Christ, Inc.

Bishop John R. Bryant

Senior Bishop, African Methodist Episcopal Church

The Reverend Dr., Ambassador Suzan Johnson Cook
Founding President, Women In Ministry International

Bishop Paul A. G. Stewart, Sr.
Acting Senior Bishop, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church

Bishop Paul S. Morton
International Presiding Bishop, Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship International

The Reverend Dr. Julius R. Scruggs
President, National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.

The Reverend Al Sharpton
President, National Action Network

The Reverend Dr. Stephen Thurston
President, National Baptist Convention of America, Inc.

The Reverend Dr. C. T. Vivian
President, Southern Christian Leadership Conference

We call on all others of like minds and empathetic hearts to join in this public affirmation by affixing your names to this historic document. To do so, please contact Dr. Barbara Williams-Skinner at dr.williams.skinner@gmail.com or call 301-318-9841.