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**Letter: A moral decision**

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To the editor:

Certainly, we need to reduce our nation's deficit. But how we cut the deficit is a moral decision. Lives hang in the balance if Congress considers cuts in programs that are vital to vulnerable people around the world.

As a member of Bread for the World, I urge our senators to protect poverty-focused development assistance. Former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates said that "development is a lot cheaper than sending soldiers." Research shows that the likelihood of violent conflict increases by 10 percent for every 5 percent drop in the income of a poor country. Poverty-focused development assistance is a strategic investment.

I thank Sen. Coats for his recent vote against stripping aid for the most vulnerable. We must continue to protect funding that is focused on lifting people out of poverty — such as nutrition programs for mothers and children. We spend only 0.6 percent of our budget on these programs.

In his important role on the Appropriations Committee, Sen. Coats can protect funding for poverty-focused development assistance and find other ways to reduce the deficit.

Hunger and poverty are not partisan issues. We must protect those in poor countries from budget cuts that cost lives.

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