



## **Federal Government Should Invest in People First**

An Editorial by President & CEO Irv Katz

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Media have reported on proposed cuts in food stamps, foster care, student loans, health care and other “people” programs to help offset the costs of rebuilding storm-ravaged areas which, in turn, compete for government funding with the war, homeland security, rising medical costs and tax cuts. Reports of food stamp cuts are above the fold and rightly so: these are dangerous and unhealthy measures.

Those of us who care about the development and care of people prefer to think about the positive---the benefits to individuals, families and communities of public investments. But the lessons from which we have to learn are too often negative: young people without options in the Middle East who turn to terrorism, immigrants in the suburbs of Paris that strike out randomly, have-nots in Benton Harbor, Michigan that riot to protest the conditions in which they live. Such conflagrations and the scope and effects of disadvantage exposed in the 9<sup>th</sup> ward of New Orleans reflect the failure of society to include and adequately invest in the poor, in youth, in immigrants and minorities.

Just as parents view expenditures for their children’s education and their purchase of a home as investments in the future, the federal government, as agent of the caring American people, needs to recognize its sustained responsibility to invest in people who do not have the choice to invest in education or buy a house, let alone feed their family or pay the rent. The programs on the federal chopping block are those that help keep people on an even keel and allow them and their families the opportunity to move forward. That they exist is the sign of a just and caring nation. That they face major cuts suggests that we have lost our way.

The President and Congress need to understand what every taxpayer understands: we cannot have it all and we cannot spend now and budget later. And do it because it is the right thing to do or because failure to do so too often leads to bad results, but invest in people first.

*Irv Katz*