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Pelosi Statement on Jubilee Act to Provide Debt Relief for World's Poorest Nations

Washington, D.C. – Speaker Nancy Pelosi spoke on the House floor today in support of H.R. 2634, the Jubilee Act for Responsible Lending and Expanded Debt Cancellation, which directs the Bush Administration to begin negotiations for an agreement with international creditors to allow up to 24 additional low-income countries to qualify for international debt relief. Below are Pelosi's remarks:

"I thank the gentleman [Mr. Frank] for yielding. I thank him for his kind words of recognition to the Pelosi Amendment and I thank him for his tremendous leadership on debt forgiveness, not only now but for a number of years. He and Congresswoman Maxine Waters have really made a tremendous difference in all of this.

"God bless us in this House to be able to serve with Congressman Spencer Bachus. He has been such a wonderful leader in the House – values-based policies, sensitive to the needs of people and world and how that relates to the security of our country, and how this is important from the standpoint of security and compassion, that it makes good practical economic sense as well.

"I was very pleased to accept Congresswoman Waters' acknowledgment of our insisting that it be brought up today, because today is the day we welcome the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI to Washington, D.C. Many of us have just returned from the White House where we were very proud of the welcoming ceremony presided over by President Bush and Mrs. Bush, to welcome Pope Benedict, and to be stirred by both of their words – the words of our

President and also of the Holy Father.

"In his remarks, the Holy Father talked about truth and justice and freedom. He talked about respecting the dignity and worth of every person, regarding each other as brothers and sisters, all God's children. He made a beautiful and inspiring speech. And really his speech was reflected in the remarks Spencer Bachus made here in that same regard as what our responsibilities are to our brothers and sisters.

"Today is the Holy Father's birthday. He is spending his birthday with friends and it is in friendship that we bring this act to the floor today. Not the first resolution to welcome his Holiness to America. Last week we all voted in strong support for Congressman McCotter's resolution to welcome the Holy Father. Yesterday Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren had legislation on the floor relating to religious workers' visas and their ability to work in the United States, which is an issue of importance to his Holiness and now, today this important resolution.

"The former Holy Father, Pope Paul VI, said: 'If you want peace, work for justice.' There has always been a connection here. With this debt forgiveness that enables countries to do many more things to promote justice in their countries, whether it's the eradication of disease, the alleviation of poverty, illuminating some of the factors that contribute to the fury of despair that leads to violence that makes the world less safe. And for Pope John Paul II, this was a high priority.

"But it's not just a Catholic initiative. It's been an interfaith initiative in the country, in the world, and certainly in this Congress. So it's very exciting on the Holy Father's birthday as we welcome him to America, we do so in a way, that gives the authority to negotiate for these improvements to the forgiveness of debt so that we can do what is right for respecting the spark of divinity that exists in every person in the world. So that we can try to bring them some justice; we who have so much must help those, who are God's children, who need our help. And give them hope.

"People say to me: 'Where is hope?' I say: 'Hope, it's right where it's always been. Hope sits right there comfortably between faith and charity.' People of faith who believe in the goodness of the people and we have faith in the charity that that will bring forth, will help honor the hope that people have in the world.

"This is a great occasion, again, to welcome His Holiness to stand up for all the people in world, to do what he called us upon to do. This morning, he called upon us to do what is right – he said we must have the courage. Today I hope we have a unanimous bipartisan show of courage to do what is right and again I thank Mr. Frank, Mr. Bachus, and Congresswoman Waters for their relentlessness on this issue and the opportunity they gave us to give hope today."