

# Black church group criticizes congressional tax cuts

by [Adelle M. Banks](#)

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WASHINGTON (RNS) The newly launched Conference of National Black Churches criticized Congress on Thursday (Dec. 9) for linking extension of unemployment benefits to tax cuts for the wealthy.

"Based on our prophetic responsibility to speak to those in power on behalf of the poor, underserved, and vulnerable, we find it utterly shameful that those who insisted that the deficit be reduced, now celebrate billions of dollars being added to the deficit as tax cuts for the wealthy," wrote the Rev. W. Franklyn Richardson, chairman of the umbrella group of nine historically black denominations.

The letter called on President Obama and Congress to endorse "an extension of unemployment insurance without conditions."

The group issued the letter as 300 of its leaders met in Washington to restart the work begun by the now-defunct Congress of National Black Churches, which helped rebuild Southern black churches destroyed in a spate of arsons in the 1990s.

In an interview Friday, Richardson said the meeting formalized partnerships to build summer schools and after-school programs for poor children with the Children's Defense Fund and address health disparities with Balm in Gilead, a Richmond, Va.-based organization.

"We're asking every congregation to give 10 minutes once a month for health professionals in the congregation to talk about a particular health issue," he said.

The leaders, who also plan to address economic empowerment and social justice issues, represent 50,000 congregations.

"It's a very important move on the part of our community," Richardson said of the relaunch of the group. "We think we can collectively have more impact than we have individually."