

Unto the Least of These

Prop 86 Press Conference with Jim Wallis

My name is Ryan Bell and I am pastor of the Hollywood 7th-day Adventist Church. My church, along with many churches in the PICO Network all over California have worked for the last several years to make sure that all children in California have access to medical care. Up and down the state over the last few months, people of faith volunteered their time collecting signatures to put Proposition 86 on the November ballot. I am proud to say that together we collected almost 100,000 signatures from voters who shared the same vision for a California that guarantees that every child can visit the doctor or dentist when needed. In the face of this groundswell of support it saddens me that Big Tobacco would resort to an expensive and misleading media campaign that clouds the truth to voters. We are here today to fight back.

As Christians, we are called to welcome the stranger and care for the sick, the weak and the marginalized. Jesus himself said,

Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

"The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these children of mine, you did for me.'

What will the King say when we explain that in the wealthiest state of the wealthiest country in the world we could not manage to care for our sick children? What will the King say when we tell him that the

least of these, our children – and the poorest of our children, at that – were not that important?

My faith tradition teaches me that God values the whole person, not just their soul, but body, mind and soul. I have learned that the health of our bodies is something that God cares about and something God's children should care about as well.

Especially when it comes to the weakest members of our society being singled out by Big Tobacco and then left in economic gutter because we can't afford to provide health care – it's unconscionable, and people of faith must stand up and insist that things change.

I, my congregation, all the congregations in the LA Voice network and the PICO Network of California are here to say, enough is enough. Our children matter to God and they matter to us.

Thank you!