

## Let Us Forsake No Other in Need

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This week, the New Hampshire Senate is expected to vote on HB 267, a bill which would place a 36% interest rate cap on so-called “payday loans.” I applaud the actions of the New Hampshire House, which has already passed this bill, and the Senate Commerce Committee, which voted last week to recommend passage in the Senate. I hope that the full Senate will give its approval, because this bill is one of the most important measures which will be considered by the legislature this session.

Payday lending - the giving of short term loans using post-dated checks or pay stubs as collateral - is a practice that harshly impacts low-wage workers and the poor. These types of loans, by their very nature, encourage repeat borrowing, and people often become inescapably mired in debt as the predatory lenders charge astronomical interest rates which can range as high as 500%. This is why the establishment of an interest rate cap is of such critical importance to New Hampshire citizens.

Not long before he died, Pope John Paul II attacked greedy lending practices as “a scourge that is a reality in our time and that has a stranglehold on many peoples’ lives.” This stranglehold must be broken if the working, indebted poor are to be given a chance to make a life for themselves and their families.

The Church’s solidarity with the poor has its roots in the great themes of justice that resound throughout the Old Testament. Over and over again, the Scriptures emphasize that the measure of a man is the extent to which he deals justly with the poor. “The good man takes pity and lends,” says the Psalmist. “Open-handed, he gives to the poor.”

This consciousness of our responsibility toward those who are in need has deep roots in our American experience as well. In William Bradford's reminiscence, "*Of Plymouth Plantation*," he recalled that when he and most other colonists were struck down with illness, only six or seven men were left strong enough to care for the rest. Bradford recounts how these few "spared no pains, night or day." Echoing the Psalmist, he noted that "they forsook none that had need of them."

This is the vision of community and justice we have inherited from our forebears and that animates our civic life today. The enactment of HB 267 stands in that tradition. The Senate ought to pass HB 267 when it comes to the floor — put an end to predatory lending practices. Let's do the right thing!