

Emergency Campaign for America's Priorities

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President's Budget is Backwards ECAP Calls on Congress to Reject the Budget and Put "First Things First!"

**** Reaction to 2008 Budget from ECAP Partners Below ****

Washington, DC – Today, the Bush Administration released a budget proposal for fiscal year 2008 that would devastate vital public services relied upon by working families in America. This budget includes drastic cuts to a variety of services including the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), the Head Start program, Food Stamps, child care, job training, and Medicare and Medicaid-- cuts that will hurt millions of people, young and old alike. The Emergency Campaign for America's Priorities (ECAP) called on Congress to reverse the Administration's policy of drastic cuts to programs that primarily benefit the poor and middle class in order to finance tax cuts that benefit the wealthy and special interests.

"President Bush's budget turned a blind eye to the growing economic insecurities that middle class and working poor Americans are facing. Since Bush took office, the median household income has dropped leaving the middle class worse off and that under his watch the number of Americans living in poverty has grown to 37 million. The Bush budget will deny health coverage to children even though last year the number of uninsured children grew by 361,000. This budget seeks to further cut services for average American families, including health care and education while failing to fix the Alternative Minimum Tax that affects more and more middle class families every year.

"First Things First, Mr. President.

"We want Congress to reject this sham of a budget proposal and to take us in the new direction voters demanded last November and renew our nation's moral commitment that every one deserves to live in dignity. Americans have a shared value that each of us deserves the opportunity to succeed, to have access to adequate health care, food, housing, education and the economic security to live with dignity. And yet, unmet needs are growing – 250,000 child care slots have been lost since 2000, with child care denied to another 200,000 children between FY 2006 and FY 2008. Seventeen states are facing shortfalls in 2007 in the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP); yet the President would make further cuts. Food Stamp benefits average only \$1 per individual for a meal; but the Administration proposes to deny Food Stamps to hundreds of thousands of working families, and to eliminate the Commodity Supplemental Food Program,

which provides help to low-income older Americans and some families with children. And even while millions of Americans struggle to make ends meet each week, the Administration seeks to cut job training funding by over \$300 million and to merge programs in a way that eliminates funds specifically reserved for workers dislocated from their jobs by plant closings.

“The president’s budget has failed to meet these basic needs of Americans here at home. Rather than working to meet these critical needs in his budget proposal, this President has mortgaged the future of generations of Americans, in order to finance enormous and irresponsible tax cuts for the wealthiest one percent of Americans. It’s clear that President Bush plans to ‘stay the course’ and continue demanding sacrifices from ordinary Americans and future generations to reward corporate interests and millionaires with massive tax breaks,” said Anne Filipic, spokesperson for ECAP.

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Statements from ECAP’s Partnering Organizations:

Gerald W. McEntee, President of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), AFL-CIO

“As we enter the fourth year of a costly military conflict abroad, the President wants to make permanent tax cuts for the rich that no commander-in-chief should support during time of war. It’s an outrage that he wants to gut basic domestic services to do it.

“President Bush has proposed slashing Medicare, Medicaid, and children’s health services that millions of Americans rely upon to survive. To pay for his expensive war abroad, President Bush is willing to abandon basic domestic responsibilities like health care here at home.

“This is not an honest budget. It fails to account for the true costs of the war in Iraq and underestimates our national deficit.

“This budget shows that President Bush remains painfully out of touch with the economic insecurities faced by so many Americans. This is not the time to cut taxes for the rich and neglect programs that serve the middle class and working poor.”

AFSCME is the largest union for workers in the public service with 1.4 million members nationwide. AFSCME organizes for economic and social justice in the workplace and advocates for working families through political action and legislative advocacy. AFSCME represents a diverse group of service and health care workers in the public and private sectors, including nurses, EMTs, bus drivers, child care providers, custodians and librarians.

USAction

Our federal budget reflects our nation's priorities, and last November we made ourselves crystal clear: the upside-down priorities that President Bush and his allies have used to cut funding for health care, education, housing and other vital supports – all to finance tax giveaways to multimillionaires – must be reversed.

Unfortunately – but not surprisingly – the president didn't get the message. The tax cuts in his budget proposal would cost \$1.6 trillion, and his plans to continue and escalate the war in Iraq will add billions more, not to mention the immeasurable cost in human lives. His health-care cuts come at a time when costs continue to skyrocket, and his proposals for student loans and clean energy are totally inadequate.

The president's budget is unaffordable and unacceptable. USAction, our affiliates in 24 states, and our coalition partners across the country are prepared to fight for a budget that reverses six years of upside-down priorities and reflects an agenda of investment in America's future.

--Alan Charney, Program Director, USAction

National Women's Law Center

“The White House budget once again demonstrates that when it comes to the concerns of ordinary Americans, the President just doesn't get it. Less than a week after acknowledging growing income inequality, President Bush released a budget that would make it harder for low- and moderate-income families to access the health care, child care and food assistance they need to get ahead. The budget would widen the holes in our already tattered safety net. And it would make life tougher for women and families struggling to make ends meet. But when it comes to tax cuts for millionaires, the budget spares no expense. These are not America's priorities.”

-- Nancy Duff Campbell, Co-President, National Women's Law Center

Coalition on Human Needs

“The minimum Americans should require of any new budget proposal is that it makes progress in meeting urgent needs. But this budget goes backwards – denying health insurance to children, and failing to provide Food Stamps and child care aid to hundreds of thousands of working families. The most vulnerable are this budget's primary targets: children, the sick, and the elderly will lose health care, home energy, nutrition assistance, and more.”

--Deborah Weinstein, Executive Director, Coalition on Human Needs.

Food Research and Action Center (FRAC)

The President's budget released today does little to reflect what should be our nation's priorities. Any modest improvements are overshadowed by cost-cutting

measures that shortchange the 35 million Americans struggling against hunger, but make room for tax cuts that benefit the wealthiest.

The proposed budget would eliminate food stamp eligibility for approximately 300,000 people in working families with children, which are low-income but not receiving cash assistance. This also reduces the number of low-income children receiving school breakfast and lunch. Another proposal eliminates the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), a program that provides nutrition assistance to more than 485,000 low-income seniors trying to make ends meet. Many vulnerable seniors need both food stamps and Commodity Supplemental Food Program aid. This budget should bolster, not diminish help to seniors barely making ends meet.

Once again, the President proposes to limit automatic WIC eligibility for Medicaid recipients and reduce funding for nutrition education and WIC services. This will reduce access and quality of services to low-income mothers, infants, and children who are nutritionally at risk.

It also eliminates funding for the Community Services Block Grant program, which includes the Community Food and Nutrition Program that provides federal support for anti-hunger and nutrition advocacy groups at the local, state and national level. Another proposal zeroes out funding for the Congressional Hunger Center Leland Emerson Hunger Fellowship, thus jeopardizing the future of a program that works effectively to end hunger domestically and internationally.

With the coming reauthorization of the Farm Bill, this budget proposal misses an opportunity to address hunger and poverty in the U.S. by strengthening food assistance programs.

FRAC will have ongoing analysis available on its Web site (www.frac.org).

United for a Fair Economy

“President Bush’s budget proposes more tax breaks for multi-millionaires at the expense of middle- and low-income Americans. This is clearly the wrong priority for our country at a time of growing economic inequality. Instead, the estate tax, which is paid only by millionaires, could be focused on funding a GI Bill for everyone. That would provide a trillion dollars over 10 years to help average Americans get ahead through owning a home, starting a business, or earning a college diploma. Strengthening economic opportunity is the best way to build a stronger and fairer economy.”

--Lee Farris, Senior Organizer on Estate Tax Policy, at United for a Fair Economy.

Center on Economic and Policy Research

“For the second year in a row, the President’s budget has cut funding for the Survey of Income and Program Participation. We understand this budget was based on estimates of funding for FY 2007, and hope that full funding will be restored to reflect the wishes of Congress as expressed in their FY 07 joint funding resolution. Data from the SIPP are essential to good policymaking. If we lose the SIPP, we will lose the only source of high-quality data on the effectiveness of many vital government programs, including Social Security, Medicaid, and Food Stamps.”

The Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs

“By asking Congress to eliminate the National Farmworkers Job Program, President Bush has again demonstrated his insensitivity to the hardest-working, lowest-paid segment of our nation’s workforce. It is critical that Congress continues to support America’s migrant and seasonal farmworkers, who rely on this program to break the cycle of poverty and provide a better life for their families.”

--David Strauss, Executive Director, The Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs.