



Stop the Slashing:

Straight and convincing talk about the federal budget

The following pages will provide you with tips and tools to make policy makers hear your voice on these critical budget issues facing our nation.

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Introduction

Budget Slashing: Overview and Impact

Congress must support a fair and responsible deficit reduction plan that includes increased revenues, not just cuts in spending. Most importantly, it must protect vulnerable populations and support investments that are needed to strengthen our economy and expand economic security and opportunity for all.

Proposals are being made in Washington that would result in truly drastic cuts to essential programs like Medicare, Medicaid, SNAP/food stamps, and most other low-income programs, such as housing, education and training, services to protect children from abuse or neglect, and meals for seniors. These proposals are being made even as our country is still struggling to recover fully from the deepest recession since the Great Depression. Millions of Americans remain out of work and are unable to find jobs that provide financial security for themselves and their families. Millions of Americans also continue to face the prospect of losing their homes due to the on-going foreclosure crisis, while rent is rising well above inflation in many areas.

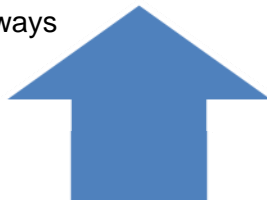
There is a better way. Throughout our history, the federal government has played an essential role in spurring economic growth, increasing opportunity, and building the middle class. It must not abandon that role now. The nation can and should reduce the deficit over time through a balanced and common sense approach that includes equitable increases in revenue and thoughtful reductions in expenditures that do not serve the public interest, including wasteful military spending that does not add to our security.

In short, Congress and the Obama Administration must adopt and implement policies that will hasten economic recovery and build a strong foundation for our shared future. This responsible approach will place the nation on firm fiscal footing for economic expansion that benefits everyone.

Included in this packet are ways for you or your organization to ensure that Congress hears our voices. All of these strategies work best if you understand the position that YOUR

members of congress hold. Check out their webpage and voting record when

budget.



Fair and responsible deficit reduction plan
Include revenues, not just spending cuts
Protect and invest in children, women and families



Stop cuts to essential programs for our communities
Reject global spending caps
Oppose block grants for Medicaid and SNAP
you communicate about the

The 5 Minute Advocate.....

Ways to get involved in 5 minutes or less

1. Send emails to your Representative and Senators

Make sure you are on the Coalition on Human Needs' [email list](#), and you will be sent occasional alerts telling you about important votes coming up in Congress. You'll get links to "click and send" letters to Congress. They are most effective if you change the text to reflect your own concerns and experience, but the basics are right there for you, and when you indicate your zip code, the emails will be sent to your Rep. and/or Senators. You can also check the CHN website's [Take Action page](#) to see the current suggested email.

2. Call your Representatives and Senators

You can call any time to indicate your support or opposition on an upcoming vote. (You can call the U.S. Capitol Switchboard (202-224-3121) and ask to be connected to your Senators or Rep.) CHN also sends alerts, usually with toll-free numbers to call, when there's a unified effort to get many calls in – your help then is especially important.

3. Comment Online about Newspaper Articles or Opinion Pieces

If your newspaper provides for online comments, it's quick and easy to get your point of view out and to supply new information. If an opinion piece is written that you agree with, pay attention to the comments opponents are writing. Make sure you get your comments in so that it doesn't look like the majority of your community rejects views you share. If you don't agree with a piece, or know it is factually inaccurate, it's a good opportunity to set the record straight.

4. Use social media

Twitter and other social media allow individuals and organizations to facilitate connections among advocacy groups and policy experts by creating an echo chamber around our work. Start by following us on [Twitter](#) at CoalitiononHN. Here are some [simple guidelines](#) from Half in Ten about how to make getting your voice heard through Twitter easy and effective.

5. Consider what your "Budget Elevator Pitch" would be

If you were in an elevator with your member of Congress, what could you say to convince him/her not to make cuts? What about if you were in an elevator with a friend who has different political views than you? Look over CHN's [Budget Tutorial's](#) to help you think about your "pitch".

6. Send this list to ten friends

Two ways to get involved in One hour or less

1. Write a Letter-to-the-Editor: You are an expert in your own story!

When Congress proposes drastic cuts to the programs our communities rely on - Medicaid, Medicare, SNAP/food stamps, and most other low-income programs-it is essential that they see a response. You can provide that response and introduce important information through Letters to the Editor. All you have to do is find one story in your local paper and react to it! Email Angie Evans at aevans@chn.org if you have any questions, trouble coming up with themes or need help posting.

What should my Letter to the Editor look like?

- It should be short. Usually no more than 200 words but every newspaper tells you their word limit and other requirements in the “letters to the editor” section.
- Always include contact information at the end of the letter so they know who it is from, i.e. your name and address.
- Comments! If your letter is posted online there is usually a comment section. Get people to comment on your letter and to defend its points if negative comments are posted.
- The best letters are the ones you write in your own words– because you can add references to local conditions and speak from your own experience. But you can get ideas from the samples below. Where we talk generally about proponents of the House budget, you may wish to be critical about your own Representative’s support for that budget, if he/she voted for it, or to praise their vote against it.

The following examples can be used to develop themes in your letter.

Say No to Balanced Budget Amendments

Members of Congress who support an amendment to the U.S. Constitution to require the federal budget to be balanced each year are being reckless with our economic future.

The need for federal spending increases when the economy falters: more people need unemployment insurance, nutrition aid, and Medicaid, for example. Such spending not only protects people who are out of work; it also pumps money into the economy and prevents the downturn from worsening. But reduced revenue from a weak economy would force spending cuts if the budget had to be balanced, even though needs had increased.

This flaw is present in all balanced budget amendments. Some versions are even more dangerously extreme. They would make it very difficult to raise revenues as a means of reducing the deficit and would force almost exclusive reliance on spending

cuts. They would force truly harsh cuts in essential programs – including Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, food stamps, education, and virtually every other aspect of government.

Rigid multi-year spending limits, whether in constitutional amendments or other legislation, will harm our economy and our people. They will deny people the opportunity to share in economic growth, while protecting tax breaks that disproportionately help people with the highest incomes.

Reverse Robin Hood

Robin Hood would never have remained a popular hero for hundreds of years if he stole from the poor and gave to the rich.

But under the House budget plan a majority in the House want to do just that: end Medicare and Medicaid as we know them, limit nursing-home and home-health care for our seniors, cut the grants that let low-income kids go to college, and slash food stamp funding. Very little of these massive cuts go to reduce government debt, but instead give even more tax cuts to millionaires, billionaires and hugely profitable multinational corporations.

The American people reject the cruel illogic of taking from those who already have too little in order to give more to those who already have a lot.

Medicaid and Family Values

Some in Congress like to call on the federal government to follow the same budgeting practices as America's families. But the plan to weaken Medicaid—which currently pays many seniors' nursing home bills and covers low-income families with children and people with disabilities—would never pass muster around the kitchen table.

In bad times like these, the demand for Medicaid naturally rises. The House budget would change the system by providing a fixed amount of Medicaid funding to the states each year, regardless of economic conditions. If that means some of the sick and needy go without—tough luck!

No family would ever balance its budget by cutting off medical care to its most vulnerable members. At Congress' "kitchen table," they should be grappling with ways to protect essential services by doing without extra helpings of tax breaks to the richest among us.

Destroying Medicare to Save It

Claims by House Budget Committee Chair Paul Ryan that he is somehow trying to "preserve" Medicare by eliminating its basic purpose—efficiently guaranteeing quality medical care for our seniors and disabled—sound a lot like the commanding officer's explanation that he destroyed a wartime village in order to save it.

The fact is that under Ryan's plan Medicare would cease to exist in its current form: a guaranteed public health insurance program in which risk is broadly shared and

expenses kept low. It would instead pay more to private insurance companies for less coverage, leaving it up to seniors to pay a lot more – in fact, double what they are paying now by 2022. And if they cannot afford to pay, well, they'll just have to do without health care.

We can't allow the Ryan scheme to "save" Medicare by destroying it.

The Revenue Problem

Contrary to what supporters of the House budget say, our national debt does reflect a revenue problem. The problem is that hugely profitable corporations and hyper-rich individuals don't contribute their fair share to the public good.

Over the years, the tax code has been turned upside down in order to reward wealth over work. The top income tax rate is barely a third what it was under President Eisenhower, only half what it was under President Reagan. Taxes used to be higher on unearned income (money made from money, like interest and dividends) than earned income (income from work), but now the opposite is true. Meanwhile, multinational corporations with bulging treasuries go tax free year after year. Under the House budget, taxes on the wealthy would go down even more.

Before we deny children food stamps and the elderly medical care, let's fix our revenue problem first.

2. Share your story

The Road to Shared Prosperity is a collection of personal stories about programs building the American Dream. Providers, clients and agencies have shared stories around how different programs are helping people every day. Visit the [submission page](#) and share how a program has changed your life or the life of someone you know.

Ways to get involved when you have more time

1. Help Plan a Site Visit with Your Member of Congress

It's important to schedule a time for members of Congress to visit programs and agencies that receive funding from the federal budget (examples: community action agencies, emergency food sites, "211" call centers, and successful job training programs). These visits put a face on the challenges community members confront and show how constituents are working to solve problems. Please visit our "[Toolkit](#)" section for more information around scheduling these events. Please contact Angie Evans at Aevans@chn.org if you would like more guidance around this important strategy.

2. Educate yourself

The Coalition on Human Needs has hosted multiple [webinars](#) to explore the massive cuts in essential services like Medicaid, Medicare, SNAP/food stamps, education and children's services, help to low-income communities such as housing and the Community Services Block Grant. Visit the [Budget Tutorial's](#) page to learn more about how the federal budget could affect your community. Help to educate others by replaying our most recent webinar, [Stop the Slashing, a Guide for the Budget Perplexed.](#)

3. Visit your members of Congress

Every member of Congress has a local office in-state. Drop-in or schedule a meeting with local staffers to talk about your concerns and share stories. Leave something in writing if possible.

4. Share information

Share the information you get with other parents, fellow association attendees, local businesses and neighbors. You could even ask your school board or Chamber of Commerce about doing a five minute presentation on the impact that the federal cuts. Contact Angie Evans at aevans@chn.org if you need help doing this.