

PROTECTING PEOPLE FROM CUTS IN VITAL SERVICES: RECOMMENDED MESSAGES FOR CONGRESS

If you're making a brief pitch on the phone:

Please oppose reducing or eliminating services in Medicaid, Food Stamps, and other critical assistance. Please do not allow states to require vulnerable people to pay more for lifesaving services. Working families have already been hit hard by these economic times – Congress should not be making their lives even more difficult. And it is simply wrong to enact unnecessary and unfair tax cuts while cutting essential services.

When you're writing a letter or in a meeting:

- Please oppose cuts in Medicaid, Food Stamps, and other help for vulnerable children, the elderly, and people with disabilities. Cuts in these services can mean the difference between life and death for people who are sick and have no place else to turn. Requiring vulnerable people – including working families – to pay money they do not have for services will mean they will go without lifesaving medical care. Cutting food stamps means more people will go hungry.

- Congress must not allow essential federal eligibility and benefits protections in Medicaid and Food Stamps to be weakened or eliminated. Giving states more authority to reduce benefits or to ask needy people to pay more of the costs of medical care is the wrong choice.

- Congress must reject caps or block grant proposals that restrict federal funding for Medicaid, Food Stamps, or other vital assistance. Such restrictions, whether applied to some or all states, make it harder to respond to growing need during hard times when more people lose jobs and health insurance.

- If Congress cuts these lifeline services, more families will be uninsured, with untreated illnesses and more trips to the emergency room. More children will be undernourished, and will be more likely to get sick and suffer delays in growth. Cuts that deny people essential help are not only morally wrong – they mean higher costs for all of us, as our health insurance rises to cover the costs of the uninsured.

- Children and families are our future. The federal government should invest in nutrition and medical care so that needy children can learn and do well in school. Please reject cuts that result in fewer children getting the food and medical care they need.

- Please vote against more tax cuts. Tax cuts that aren't "paid for" drain badly needed revenues from the federal government and worsen the deficit. Plus, it's the wrong priority to cut taxes at the same time service cuts are being proposed to deny essential help to low-income elderly people in nursing homes and children and families.

- We stand with the majority of Americans who do not want to hurt vulnerable people. We don't want to deny them health care. We don't want children to go without food. We don't want to pass along deeper deficits to our children because the government made the wrong choices and enacted tax cuts paid for with borrowed money. Please stand up for the right choices – reject harmful service cuts and irresponsible tax cuts.

Some additional messages about specific programs:

Medicaid:

- **I know people in my community who need the lifesaving care that Medicaid provides.** A catastrophic accident or illness or loss of job could put me in the same situation. Cutting Medicaid benefits or eligibility is the wrong choice.
- **We have a health care crisis, not a Medicaid crisis.** The government should work to control the costs of prescription drugs and other care, not cut lifesaving care for vulnerable people who cannot afford coverage on their own.

Food Stamps:

- **Cuts in basic nutrition for children make it harder for them to learn** in school and grow up to become healthy, productive members of society. Community food banks are already stretched to their limits; don't make things worse.
- **Millions of families in America lack the money to buy enough food at all times for healthy living.** Medical research shows that children in such families are more likely to get sick or have impaired development. Food stamps can prevent children from suffering ill health and slow growth. Cutting this essential benefit is simply wrong.
- **The Food Stamp Program is well managed and well targeted;** it has a low error rate and almost all the benefits go to households below the poverty line (for example, below \$16,000 for a 3-person family).

Earned Income Tax Credit:

- **Oppose raising taxes on hard-working people by cutting the Earned Income Tax Credit.** People who work long hours just to put food on the table should not see their taxes go up while people with investment income get even more tax breaks. Those are the wrong priorities.

Supplemental Security Income (SSI):

Reject cuts in SSI that will hurt vulnerable people with disabilities. We should be protecting them, not making it harder for them to afford basic necessities.