

For Immediate Release
April 29, 2005

**Groups Concerned by Congressional Budget that Takes
from the Poor and Gives to the Rich**

*Leading Advocates Express Disappointment over Final Budget that Includes Large Cuts
to Medicaid, Food Stamps, Children's Health Care*

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) National leading advocacy groups for children, families, labor, and the environment today joined together to voice their strong opposition to the \$2.6 trillion budget passed Thursday night.

The bill includes significant cuts to everything from Medicaid and food stamps to education and job training, as well as paving the way to opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to drilling. At the same time, the bill would provide over \$100 billion in tax breaks, largely to upper-income Americans. The Senate voted 52-47 to approve the budget resolution, while the House passed the bill by a vote of 214-211.

Individual group reactions follow:

AFL-CIO:

“Cuts of this magnitude will devastate the states, which recently endured their worst fiscal crises since World War II and are struggling already to meet explosive Medicaid cost growth, fueled by swelling ranks of the uninsured and the federal government’s shifting of costs for acute and long-term care for the elderly and disabled. Enacting the Medicaid cuts contemplated by the budget resolution will seriously undermine states’ ability to provide basic health coverage for the nation’s most vulnerable individuals and families.”

- John Sweeney, President

202-637-5000, www.aflcio.org

The AFL-CIO's mission is to bring social and economic justice to the nation by enabling working people to have a voice on the job, in government, in a changing global economy, and in their communities.

BREAD FOR THE WORLD:

“Overall, the budget misses the mark. It does not balance our nation’s need for security with our moral commitment to help hardworking people who are struggling to feed their families and build a better life. The budget is more than a recitation of numbers and acronyms, programs and plans. Fundamentally, it is a moral document that reflects our country’s values and shapes our future.”

- Rev. David Beckmann, President

202-639-9400, www.bread.org

Bread for the World is a nonpartisan citizens' movement of 54,000 people of faith, including 2,500 churches, which addresses hunger in our communities and around the world.

CALL TO RENEWAL:

“Our political leadership’s tax cut mentality ignores “the least of these” – leaving them with crumbs from the feast of the comfortable. And it does nothing to help our deficit problems. Religious communities spoke clearly in the past years about the perils of a domestic policy based primarily on tax cuts for the rich, program cuts for low-income people, and an expectation of faith-based charity. **We speak clearly now against budget proposals asking that the cost of the deficit be borne by the poor, who are not to blame and can least afford it.**”

- Rev. Jim Wallis, Convener

202-328-8745, www.calltorenewal.org

Call to Renewal is a national network of churches, faith-based organizations, and individuals working to overcome poverty in America.

CATHOLIC CHARITIES USA:

“We are disappointed that apparently the budget will require substantial cuts in health care for the poor and elderly, a devastating decision at a time when millions have lost their health insurance and have no way to pay for medical care.”

- Rev. Larry Snyder, President

703-549-1390, www.catholiccharitiesusa.org

Catholic Charities USA is the membership association of one of the nation's largest social service networks, providing vital social services to people in need.

CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES

“The new budget cuts domestic programs in the name of deficit reduction. But it includes more tax cuts heavily oriented toward those with the highest incomes, as well as further increases in defense spending. As a result, deficits would increase by more than \$150 billion over the next five years, compared with the deficits the Congressional Budget Office says will occur if there are no changes in current policies. This budget digs the deficit hole deeper and passes more debt on to future generations, while using budget cuts aimed at the poor and vulnerable to help finance tax breaks for the well-off and the well-connected.

Sad to say, the country would be better off with no budget plan than with this one. Without it, deficits would be lower, and cuts in programs for the needy wouldn't be imposed to pay for more tax cuts for the wealthiest.”

- Robert Greenstein, Executive Director

202-408-1080, www.cbpp.org

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities is one of the nation’s premier policy organizations working at the federal and state levels on fiscal policy and public programs that affect low- and moderate-income families and individuals.

CHILDREN’S DEFENSE FUND:

“The budget reflects our moral values as a people. If we don’t take care of each other in our federal budget and justly share public goods, then services for “the least of us” will be ripped away, the care of our most vulnerable citizens will fall to the states resulting either in tax increases or further cuts in services, and children will suffer and have to bear the brunt of budget sacrifice they did not cause.

Such unjust choices end up on the doorsteps of your constituents, causing great pain in neighborhoods because of misguided tax and budget choices that say the wealthy are more entitled to federal help than the middle class, the poor, and children who, to our shame, are the poorest age group in the richest nation on earth.”

- Marian Wright Edelman, President

202-628-8787, www.childrensdefense.org

CDF provides a strong, effective voice for all the children of America who cannot vote, lobby, or speak for themselves, paying particular attention to the needs of poor and minority children and those with disabilities.

COALITION ON HUMAN NEEDS:

“The House and Senate negotiators have built a budget out of a house of cards. The economy is slowing and states are struggling to finance vital public services. This budget will come toppling down on the heads of our most vulnerable citizens through cuts to health care, education, food, and rebuilding communities – just when help is needed the most.”

- Deborah Weinstein, Executive Director

202-223-2532, DWeinstein@chn.org, www.chn.org

The Coalition on Human Needs is an alliance of national organizations working together to promote public policies that address the needs of low-income and other vulnerable populations.

CONNECT FOR KIDS:

“The severe cuts included in the budget will burden our nation’s children by cutting vital services and increasing the debt they will inherit, while protecting the interests of the wealthy with more tax cuts. Despite overwhelming votes in the House and Senate to protect Medicaid from cutbacks, the behind-the-scenes deal making has resulted in kids being cut out of the deal.”

- Jan Richter, Advocacy Director

540-948-4332, jan@connectforkids.org, www.connectforkids.org

Connect for Kids provides parents, educators, advocates, policymakers, elected officials and others with the tools and information they need to improve the lives of children, youth and families.

DEFENDERS OF WILDLIFE:

"After decades of protecting the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, lawmakers now stand at the brink: yesterday's budget vote is likely to pave the way to drilling in the Refuge through reconciliation instructions to committee chairmen who are eager to open the Refuge through this loophole. I urge the strong bipartisan coalition of Members who have stood by the Refuge during tough votes in the past to stand strong and reject any actions that threaten this extraordinary American wilderness."

- Rodger Schlickeisen, President

202-682-9400, www.defenders.org

Defenders of Wildlife is dedicated to the protection of all native wild animals and plants in their natural communities.

DOCS FOR TOTS:

"One out of four American children depends on Medicaid for their health care. Both the House and Senate voted to remove ALL Medicaid cuts from the federal budget resolution. The budget that has now come out of House and Senate negotiations violates the will of Congress by reinserting \$10 million in Medicaid cuts. Congress must stand up and say NO. This is a budget that hurts children who need health care to thrive and do well, in school and in life."

- George L. Askew, MD, Founder and Executive Director

202-898-9042, www.docsfortots.org

Docs For Tots is a nationwide network of children's doctors advocating for policies and practices that serve the best interests of children from birth to five.

THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA:

"For the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, justice is not just rhetoric, but a call to fulfill our baptismal covenant and to ACT to bring about justice for the 'least among us.' We believe the priorities of the federal budget resolution stand in contradiction to Biblical tradition. Its provisions will be truly devastating for people living in poverty in this country and around the world."

- The Reverend Mark S. Hanson, Presiding Bishop

773-380-2700, www.elca.org

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's works toward social justice on domestic and foreign policy issues facing the nation, and through it, the world.

FAMILIES USA:

"On March 17 the Senate voted that Medicaid budget changes should not be arbitrarily decided but, rather, should only occur after a bipartisan commission has the opportunity to determine the program's future directions. The House adopted a similar resolution on April 26. This agreement, however, places the cart before the horse by arbitrarily agreeing to large Medicaid cutbacks, even though a commission has not yet been appointed.

It is disgraceful that Congress adopted a federal budget that cuts \$70 billion in estate and capital gains taxes for the richest people while, at the same time, it slashes funding for seniors and children who count on Medicaid for their very survival."

- Ron Pollack, Executive Director

202-628-3030, www.familiesusa.org

Families USA is a national nonprofit, non-partisan organization dedicated to the achievement of high-quality, affordable health care for all Americans.

FOOD RESEARCH AND ACTION CENTER:

"The Food Research and Action Center is deeply disappointed that Congress passed a budget resolution that in all likelihood will cut food stamps for needy families with children and increase hunger in this country, at the same time that it reduces taxes for the very affluent and increases the deficit. Feeding hungry American children didn't cause the deficit and cutting back on the help they get will not solve it."

- Jim Weill, President

www.frac.org, 202- 986-2200

The Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) is a leading national organization working to improve public policies to eradicate hunger and undernutrition in the United States.

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF LA RAZA:

"For Hispanic Americans, this budget comes at a critical time when more rather than less investment is needed. In spite of what some may say, lawmakers have options. A vote for a budget that cuts programs for education, health, and housing programs that serve needy families is a choice and preference, *not* a necessity. There are other ways to balance the budget and Congress must look in another direction."

- Eric Rodriguez, Director, Policy Analysis Center

202-785-1670, www.nclr.org

The National Council of La Raza is a private, nonprofit, nonpartisan, tax-exempt organization established to reduce poverty and discrimination and improve life opportunities for Hispanic Americans.

VOICES FOR AMERICA'S CHILDREN:

“We applaud members of Congress who made America’s children a priority and fought off even deeper cuts to Medicaid and other low-income programs. Unfortunately even with those changes this budget will still result in a devastating loss of services for millions of America’s children. More kids will go to bed hungry, fewer will be able to see a doctor when they’re sick, and more kids will be unprepared to excel at school and life. Congress needs to do better to serve our youngest citizens.”

Debbie Stein, Director of Federal Policy and Advocacy

202-289-0777, stein@voices.org, www.voicesforamericaschildren.org

Voices for America’s Children is a national child-advocacy organization that speaks up for children on Capitol Hill and in 44 states, with a network of 57 member organizations.

THE WILDERNESS SOCIETY:

“Most Americans want to keep the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge just the way it is: wild, unspoiled, and free of oil drilling. Members of Congress should remember that the budget resolution doesn’t have to include the words ‘Arctic Refuge’ to pave the way for drilling. A vote for the budget resolution with open-ended reconciliation instructions to the House Resources and Senate Energy Committees is no different from a vote to drill in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, plain and simple.”

- Bill Meadows, President

202-833-2300, www.wilderness.org

The mission of The Wilderness Society is to deliver to future generations an unspoiled legacy of wild places, with all the precious values they hold: Biological diversity; clean air and water; towering forests, rushing rivers, and sage-sweet, silent deserts.

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