



COALITION ON HUMAN NEEDS

MEDIA ADVISORY
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Perspective of Deborah Weinstein, Executive Director of the Coalition on Human Needs, on President Obama's Budget

The President Must Lift Budget Constraints to Promote Prosperity and Protect Vulnerable People

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Tomorrow the President will release his budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 and beyond. The first question to ask about his proposal will be whether the President recommends steps to permanently end the short-sighted harmful cuts imposed in the past year. Some, known as sequestration, were partly and temporarily lifted in the recent budget deal. Others, including cuts to SNAP/food stamps and the expiration of federal unemployment insurance for the long-term jobless, are still fully in effect. Those cuts block our path to prosperity and will damage vulnerable people both in the coming fiscal year and beyond.

The recent budget agreement reduced the budget cuts for FY 2014. But the budget constraints tighten again for FY2015 and in FY 2016, sequestration will return in full force if no action is taken. The program cuts inflicted last year caused damage that cannot in many cases be undone, preventing 57,000 children from attending Head Start, leaving 70,000 low-income families at risk of homelessness by depriving them of housing supports and raising rents for many more, drastically reducing legal assistance to the poor and eliminating many thousands of meals delivered to homebound seniors. These cuts and many more like them deprive families of the means to buy basic goods and deprive businesses of customers. They prevent our children from becoming the skilled workers our economy needs to thrive in the future.

There are other critical questions that any review of the budget should include. Does it restore unemployment benefits to the long-term unemployed, which were eliminated at the end of 2013? Does it protect and restore access to nutrition benefits through SNAP for low-income families? Does it increase revenues by closing tax loopholes that let corporations hide profits offshore? Does it cut wasteful Pentagon spending and use the resulting savings to invest in people?

Human needs programs receiving annual appropriations have been cut 18 percent since 2010, starting before sequestration. Failure to break free of the sequestration straitjacket will prevent investments in education from early childhood on and in job creation that reaches those now shut out of the labor force.

Choosing to raise net new revenues from fairer taxes on the wealthiest individuals and closing offshore corporate tax loopholes will make it possible to afford education, jobs, health care, and nutrition—all the investments that will make our country prosper. There has been broad recognition that stalled mobility and growing inequality and insecurity are serious long-term problems. We must ask to what extent the President's budget addresses these very important issues. The budget can help restore equality if it requires corporations and the richest among us pay to their fair share; it can increase opportunity if it reduces unnecessary Pentagon spending and invests in our people and our prosperity.

Deborah Weinstein will be available for comments and analysis on Tuesday, March 4, after release of the President's budget. She has more than 30 years' experience as an analyst of human needs programs in federal and state budgets. CHN has been documenting the [impact of sequestration](#) since it was first implemented.

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

The Coalition's members include service providers and faith groups, civil rights, religious, labor and professional organizations and those concerned with the well-being of children, women, the elderly and people with disabilities. For more information please visit www.chn.org.