



Are you having concerned conversations with friends about dangerous federal cuts?



Are the budget proposals sending you into stunned silence?

It's time to talk to your members of Congress!

Reps and Senators are heading home for a two-week recess, April 7 – 23. During the last recess, the outpouring of outrage about repealing the health care law forced Speaker Ryan to pull the bill – they didn't have the votes. So don't underestimate the value of making that contact.

We can't stop now – Congress is about to make funding decisions for the rest of this year, and is starting to consider Trump's new budget proposals. The choices are profoundly important: will the federal government slash human needs programs to build a border wall and add billions to the Pentagon? Will Congress insert poison pill policy riders that reduce environmental, labor, consumer, or health protections? Will Congress and the Administration continue to push massive Medicaid cuts, with or without reviving the moribund health care repeal, as a way to pay for tax cuts for the rich and corporations? Will they seek cuts in SNAP, or low-income tax credits, or SSI?

We can't be stunned, and we can't talk only to ourselves. Here are ways you can talk to Congress:

- **Organize a Community Meeting or Call with your Representative or Senators:**

Get 5 or 6 organizations to meet together with the Rep. or Senator (staff or Member). You may already know the groups you'd like to team with, or, if you need ideas, look at the list of organizations in your state that signed CHN's SAVE for All letter ([here](#)) or FRAC's anti-hunger letter ([here](#)).

- **Why this is important:** A number of groups coming together to meet with members of Congress shows the staff or member that you represent many constituents and are organized enough to spread the word about support for or opposition to the member's positions. It's also a help to congressional offices to meet with several groups at once.
- **How to do it:** Call the district/state office nearest you (for Senate contact listings, check [here](#) and go to each senator's website to see all the state offices; for House members, click [here](#).) Explain that you wish to set up a meeting to discuss human needs funding and health care priorities coming before Congress soon – for House members, start by asking to meet with the Representative him/herself; if that's not possible, meet with staff. (The staff person may ask exactly what issue you wish to discuss, such as health care, education, or nutrition, since that would help them figure out which people on staff should meet with you. If you will be bringing groups concerned with a number of different issue areas, tell them that and ask for a senior staff person who can convey your concerns to the member.) If you cannot arrange an in-person meeting, ask to do one by conference call.
- **What to talk about:** This is your meeting – you may decide to focus on just one issue or many. If you're going in with a number of other organizations, of course you should figure out your scope, and who talks

about what, ahead of time. But here are some suggestions:

- **Funding about to expire on April 28:** Congress has to approve appropriations for the rest of this year (through September 30) by April 28, or much of government will shut down.
At issue: living within tight budget caps, appropriators have been negotiating funding levels for some time, and appear to be close to resolving remaining issues. President Trump is seeking \$18 billion in additional cuts to domestic or international programs to partially pay for about \$33 billion more he wants to spend this year, mostly for the military, but some for border enforcement and for his proposed border wall. Congress needs to hear that domestic programs should not be cut further; in fact, we need more investment in housing, education, child care, public health, etc., not less.
The ask:
 - **Oppose further cuts to human needs programs in the FY 2017 appropriations bill.** Since FY2010, domestic and international appropriations (also known as non-defense discretionary programs, or NDD) will have been cut by 17.5 percent, a loss of \$110 billion, counting inflation. Enough is enough.
 - **Maintain no less than the existing commitment to even-handed treatment of defense and domestic funding levels;** that is, if defense is to be increased, domestic programs should also be increased.
 - **Reject the Trump proposal** to cut domestic/international programs in order to increase the military and pay for the wall.
 - **No poison pill riders:** language making divisive policy changes around health, labor standards, environmental protections, etc. does not belong in a spending bill.

Examples of important programs that need more funding (this is an extremely partial list. For a table showing how specific human needs programs have been cut since 2010, click [here](#)):

- **Child care and Head Start:** 373,000 fewer children are receiving affordable, quality child care than in 2006 – a 16-year low. Congress recently improved training requirements for child care workers, but has not provided enough money, which will result in even bigger losses of child care placements. Head Start was hit by severe cuts in 2013, denying services to 57,000 low-income young children. These losses have been reversed; it would be a terrible waste to go backwards again. (More about the importance of low-cost, quality child care [here](#).)
- **Job training:** there are millions of 16-24 year olds out of school and out of work. But the biggest federal youth training program has been cut more than 14 percent since FY2010 (a loss of over \$140 million, taking inflation into account). The YouthBuild program, which is successful at increasing education and placing young people in jobs, has been cut by more than 25 percent. Adult job training programs have also been cut. The Trump plan would **eliminate** a training program for migrant and seasonal farmworkers and a community service employment program for seniors.
- **Rental housing vouchers:** If Congress does not increase funds for rental housing vouchers to keep pace with rising rent costs, there could be a loss of about 100,000 vouchers for low-income households. Even without that loss, subsidized housing programs don't reach enough families: only one in four eligible households get this vital help. (More on housing [here](#).)
- **Community Action anti-poverty programs:** About 1,000 community action agencies nationwide provide a large range of anti-poverty services; many run Head Start and other early childhood programs, provide emergency food, distribute home heating or cooling assistance, provide weatherization services, etc. Trump would eliminate their main source of operating funds (the Community Services Block Grant), and would also zero out the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program and weatherization services. (More about community action [here](#).)

- **Opioid and other addictions:** Opioid addictions have reached epidemic proportions across the nation. But basic substance abuse programs have been cut since 2010 (for example, the Substance Abuse Treatment Block Grant has lost more than 10 percent of its value since then, and another treatment program has been cut by one-third). It is extremely helpful that substance use disorder treatment is required to be included in health insurance under the Affordable Care Act, and there has been significant expansion of Medicaid coverage for treatment. Congress should reject weakening of required insurance coverage and should protect Medicaid, and should increase funding for treatment programs under the HHS Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.
- **Don't Let Repeal of the Affordable Care Act Revive and Don't Cut Medicaid! *At issue:*** House Republicans have been trying to get to agreement about repealing the Affordable Care Act. The latest reports are that they are trying to woo the most right-wing members by agreeing to make it an option for states to get rid of basic protections like the essential benefits package and no denial based on pre-existing conditions. They would make a very bad bill even worse. (For more about protecting health care, see the [Families USA recess packet](#).)

The ask:

- **Oppose repeal of the Affordable Care Act:** the bill that couldn't get enough votes in the House would have left 24 million people uninsured and raised insurance costs for millions more. Now the House leadership is trying to get more votes by making the bill even worse – abandoning the promise to guarantee coverage of pre-existing conditions and to provide a package of required essential benefits. It's a mess – oppose it.
- **Protect Medicaid:** Oppose efforts to end the Medicaid expansion, and oppose proposals to cap Medicaid spending through block granting or per capita caps. Do not make cuts in Medicaid to pay for tax cuts. (It would be grossly unfair to cut medical care for low-income seniors, people with disabilities and families to pay for any tax cuts, but it's even worse that the tax cuts being considered would provide hundreds of billions to health insurance companies and other corporations and to high-income individuals.)
- **For Next Year's Budget (FY 2018), Invest in Domestic Priorities; Don't Cut Them. *At issue:*** President Trump has released part of his budget for FY 2018, and in it he would cut domestic/international programs by \$54 billion in order to shift those funds to the Pentagon. He hasn't yet released the parts of his budget that deal with basic safety net programs like Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security, SNAP, or SSI. Nor has he released his proposals around taxes. Those parts of his budget are expected in May. But since he proposed trillions of dollars in upper-income tax cuts in the campaign, and supported deep Medicaid cuts in the health care repeal bill, it's appropriate to urge members of Congress to choose very different priorities.

The ask:

- **Reject shifting billions of dollars from domestic to Pentagon programs:** Among the cuts the President has proposed: *eliminating* the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (afterschool programs), the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (home heating and cooling assistance), the Community Services Block Grant (for operating anti-poverty community action agencies), the Community Development Block Grant (community infrastructure renovations, social services, accessibility improvements for people with disabilities, etc.), the Legal Services Corporation, Supplemental Education Opportunity Grants (college scholarships for low-income students), senior community service employment programs and other senior services, Americorps/VISTA, and many

environmental protection programs. He would also make substantial cuts in public housing, work-study for college students, job training, K-12 education, public health, and medical research, to name just a few areas.

- **Essential programs like SNAP, Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security, and SSI must be protected.** They should not be turned into block grants or otherwise capped. Benefits should be improved, not cut, and restrictive work requirements that result in denied benefits, not employment help, should not be imposed.
- **Oppose tax cuts that reduce revenues from high-income individuals and profitable corporations.** Corporate tax revenues have declining for the past 50 years – in 1967, they were 4.1 percent as a share of the economy (GDP); now they are only 1.5 percent. Tax cuts for the rich and corporations do not create economic growth; they just increase inequality and prevent investments (from education to infrastructure to renewable energy) that do produce growth. Revenues should be increased, for example by ending the loopholes that allow corporations to avoid taxes on income parked in overseas tax havens. (For examples of billions of dollars of corporate tax avoidance and how those funds could be better used, click [here](#).)

▪ **Go to a Town Meeting Scheduled by Your Member of Congress:**

Representatives and Senators have scheduled hundreds of meetings in their districts/states. You can find out if your Rep/Senators have scheduled meetings you can attend by checking out the website <https://townhallproject.com/>. Go to the meeting with a number of questions prepared, on issues of most concern to you. Such as:

- Do they support specific cuts proposed by Trump (see above for examples)?
- If they voted for the health care repeal bill, ask them how they can justify denying health coverage to 24 million people, eliminating the guarantee of affordable coverage despite pre-existing conditions, or big increases in premiums, especially for seniors and low-income people. If they voted against it, thank them, and seek their continued commitment to oppose.

Consider writing a letter to the editor or blog post about what the rep. or senator said during the meeting – either praise or criticism. Use social media; here are some useful hashtags to include:

#RiggedBudget #CleanBudget #BillionaireBudget #StoptheCuts

▪ **Sign the Petition: We Need a People’s Budget**

Express your support for a positive vision of what the federal budget should do:

Our nation’s budget should reflect and respond to the needs of everyday individuals and families. How we spend money says a lot about our nation’s priorities and it is vital to securing our future and our children’s future.

We need a budget that not just keeps us safe and secures us but also provides opportunities and gives us all the chance to succeed. To sign, click [here](#).

Need more information? Please contact Joseph Battistelli, CHN’s Outreach and Field Manager, at jbattistelli@chn.org



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