

The Reviews Are In: **The Republican Budget Continues to Disappoint**

The House Republican budget has been officially unveiled, and the reviews aren't pretty. It appears that the early predictions were correct: while the Republican budget includes no major surprises, it does offer plenty of disappointment. The reaction so far is that the Republican budget cannot be taken seriously, it offers more of the same, targets the most vulnerable and leaves us with unanswered questions. The first impressions of the Republican budget:

IT CANNOT BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY

Washington Post Editorial: "Paul Ryan's budget: The good, the bad and the unrealistic" [3/13]

"House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan's 10-year blueprint for federal taxes and spending is at least as much about politics as about policy. By promising to balance the federal budget by 2023 without raising taxes, the Wisconsin Republican seeks both to mollify members of the House Republican majority who are still steamed at the \$600 billion 10-year tax hike included in the 'fiscal cliff' deal three months ago and to provide them with strong talking points for voters back home."

"As such, the 91-page document is a never-going-to-become-law mélange of good ideas, bad ideas and ideas too unrealistic to worry about."

Robinson: "Paul Ryan's make-believe budget" [Washington Post, 3/11]

"You will recall that the Ryan Budget was a big Republican selling point in last year's election. Most famously, Ryan proposed turning Medicare into a voucher program. He offered the usual GOP recipe of tax cuts — to be offset by closing certain loopholes, which he would not specify — along with drastic reductions in non-defense 'discretionary' spending."

"It appears to depend on at least one ridiculous assumption and two glaring contradictions. That's for starters; I'm confident we'll see more absurdities when the full proposal is released soon."

MORE OF THE SAME

New York Times Editorial: "The Worst of the Ryan Budgets" [3/13]

"House Budget Committee chairman, Representative Paul Ryan, unveiled his 2014 spending plan: a retread of ideas that voters soundly rejected, made even worse, if possible, by sharper cuts to vital services and more dishonest tax provisions."

"All the tired ideas from 2011 and 2012 are back: eliminating Medicare's guarantee to retirees by turning it into a voucher plan; dispensing with Medicaid and food stamps by

turning them into block grants for states to cut freely; repealing most of the reforms to health care and Wall Street; shrinking beyond recognition the federal role in education, job training, transportation and scientific and medical research. The public opinion of these callous proposals was made clear in the fall election, but Mr. Ryan is too ideologically fervid to have learned that lesson.”

Wall Street Journal: “Paul Ryan’s Subtle Changes in Tone” [\[3/12\]](#)

“While many of the ideas in the new budget plan echo last year’s proposal, Mr. Ryan shuffles their order.”

National Journal: “What Paul Ryan's New Budget Means for Health Care” [\[3/12\]](#)

“House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan's budget is once again full of the politically fraught health care policies that have made the publication of its two predecessors such big events. This year’s version basically sticks to last year’s script when it comes to health care. It would make big cuts to Medicaid right away, and would postpone cuts to Medicare for 10 years.”

New York Times: “Ryan Budget Plan Aims to Roll Back Obama Agenda” [\[3/12\]](#)

“Four months after Republicans suffered a convincing defeat in the presidential election, Representative Paul D. Ryan of Wisconsin, the party’s vice-presidential nominee, unveiled a spending-and-tax plan on Tuesday that relies on the same lightning rod proposals of his 2012 campaign to balance the federal budget in 10 years.”

Washington Post: “Ryan budget plan combines old cuts, new tax revenue” [\[3/12\]](#)

“The 10-year spending plan to be released Tuesday by Rep. Paul Ryan is virtually identical to last year’s GOP budget: It would defund President Obama’s health-care initiative, end guaranteed Medicare coverage for future retirees and sharply restrain spending on the poor, college students and federal workers.”

TARGETS THE MOST VULNERABLE

Thompson: “Paul Ryan's Budget, Simplified: Save the Rich, Spare the Old, Forget the Poor”
[\[The Atlantic, 3/12\]](#)

“Paul Ryan's new budget is quite long, but its thesis can be stated briefly. If you cut spending on the poor to the bone and radically change the U.S. government's promises to help needy people pay for health care, it is remarkably easy to balance the budget.”

“Ryan pockets all of those savings. And he goes further. Much further. He repeals Obamacare. He cuts federal support for Medicaid. He cuts another \$1 trillion from "mandatory spending", which is a deceptively anodyne catch-all for mostly (a) cash assistance to the unemployed, low-income, and veterans, and (b) retirement programs for vets and federal employees.”

USA Today Editorial: “RyanCare, third time's no charm” [3/12]

“But Ryan's approach, apparently offered as a bargaining position in upcoming budget talks with the White House and congressional Democrats, is not the way to go.”

“Ryan would remake the traditional government-run program that covers most of a retiree's health care needs for as little as \$104.90 per month, depending on income, plus the cost of a prescription drug plan.”

“This strikes us as a very round-about way for the government to control its expenditures, one that would ask vulnerable seniors to navigate the highly complex world of exchanges and private insurance.”

New York Times: “Ryan Budget Plan Aims to Roll Back Obama Agenda” [3/12]

“Discretionary programs, already squeezed by caps imposed in 2011 and automatic ‘sequestration’ cuts that went into force this month, would be cut another \$249 billion. But because military spending would be allowed to rise \$500 billion over the current spending caps through 2023, the cuts to domestic programs could be deep. The budget assumes a 10-percent reduction in the federal work force by 2015. Pell grants, a popular federal higher-education aid program, would be capped at the current level of \$5,645 for 10 years. And federal education and job-training programs would be consolidated.”

Associated Press: “GOP budget takes aim again at Obamacare, Medicaid” [3/12]

“House Republicans unveiled their latest budget outline on Tuesday, sticking to their plans to try to repeal so-called Obamacare, cut domestic programs ranging from Medicaid to college grants and require future Medicare patients to bear more of the program's cost.”

IDEOLOGY OVER DEFICIT REDUCTION

Bookman: “The Ryan budget is about ideology, not finances” [Atlanta Journal Constitution, 3/12]

“However, dramatically slashing food stamps, as Ryan proposes, will not ‘give families stability’ or open doors to pursue the American dream. Slashing Medicaid, which provides health care for poor families, is not going to offer stability either. Slashing federal aid to education, including student loans, will undermine rather than improve the ability of young people of lesser means to advance. Turning Medicare into a private voucher program will make senior citizens more vulnerable, not less. In an era in which working people enjoy less and less of the nation’s bounty, such steps will leave them even more desperate, with fewer resources to draw upon.”

“Again, let’s be clear: The Ryan budget is not a response to our fiscal situation. It uses that situation as an excuse to continue a philosophical debate reaching back at least 80 years in this country, back to the founding of Social Security. The Republican Party

fought Social Security back then, and since then it has tried repeatedly to kill the program, most recently with President Bush's effort to privatize it."

Klein: "Paul Ryan's budget: Social engineering with a side of deficit reduction" [Washington Post, 3/12]

"But the real point of Ryan's budget is its ambitious reforms, not its savings. It turns Medicare into a voucher program, turns Medicaid, food stamps, and a host of other programs for the poor into block grants managed by the states, shrinks the federal role on priorities like infrastructure and education to a tiny fraction of its current level, and envisions an entirely new tax code that will do much less to encourage home buying and health insurance."

"The problem is that these ideas are not, on their own, popular. In fact, they're deeply unpopular, and considered quite radical. That's why Newt Gingrich rejected Ryan's initial budget as 'right-wing social engineering' — it is, in a very serious sense, an effort to use policy reform re-engineer the relationship individuals have with their governments, their communities, and their families. But presented on their own, Ryan's plans scare people."

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

Bloomberg: "Ryan Unveils Budget Plan to Erase Deficit in 10 Years" [3/12]

"Still, his plan leaves many questions unanswered. It would call for almost \$1 trillion in cuts to mandatory programs outside of health care without saying where much of those cuts would be made."

Associated Press: "GOP budget takes aim again at Obamacare, Medicaid" [3/12]

"A document released Tuesday offers few specifics on the proposed cuts to domestic programs, but it generally appears to incorporate spending levels for day-to-day agency operations significantly below levels called for by controversial automatic spending cuts."

Milbank: "Paul Ryan's magical budget" [Washington Post, 3/12]

"Here's how: The former Republican vice presidential candidate's budget eliminates ___ loopholes in the tax code, cutting the ___ and the ___ deductions. It reduces spending on the ___ program by ___ and the ___ program by ___. Retirees would see ___, students would experience ___ and the poor would be ___."

"There are so many blanks in Ryan's budget that it could be a Mad Libs exercise. But this is not a game. It's black-box budgeting — an expression of lofty aims, with binders full of magic asterisks in lieu of specific cuts to government benefits."