



March 16, 2005

U. S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the more than 1.3 million members of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), I urge you to oppose H. Con. Res. 95, the FY 2006 Budget Resolution and instead vote for a substitute budget resolution that will be offered by Rep. John Spratt (D-S.C.). In addition, I urge you to vote for an amendment that will be offered by Rep. David Obey (D-Wis.) to the underlying bill that would provide additional funds for key domestic programs.

As reported by the Budget Committee, the budget resolution cuts education, Medicaid, job training and numerous other domestic programs that are now helping millions of Americans become productive members of society. The proposed cuts would deny millions of children access to vital education services critical to spurring student achievement while also increasing the number of uninsured Americans by requiring cuts to the Medicaid program. The cuts also would limit the number of adults served by essential job training programs designed to help them attain employment. Instead of adequately funding these important domestic priorities, the budget accommodates \$106 billion (\$45 billion of which is protected through reconciliation) in additional tax cuts over a five-year period.

Funds for education should be augmented, not reduced. At a time when schools, educators and students are being asked to do more by the federal government, the budget resolution ducks its responsibility to provide the resources needed to support increased student achievement. The insufficient level of discretionary funding established in the resolution for education would also force the elimination or underfunding of a vast number of important programs serving students of all ages. This budget assumes a 14 percent reduction in education over the next five years. Thus, it will be difficult in future years to provide appropriate increases for Title I, special education or the Pell Grant program.

The proposed cuts to entitlement programs will only serve to shift to the states the fiscal burden of providing these essential services. In addition, cuts to Medicaid, the State Children's Health Insurance Program, nutrition programs, and child care assistance programs target the individuals least able to absorb the loss. These programs often provide a lifeline for struggling families by providing the means for attaining healthier and more productive lives. Congress will be forcing states to make the difficult decision of choosing between reducing expenditures for education and other vital services, or cutting jobs and healthcare--or both.

In contrast, the Obey amendment provides additional funds for education and healthcare that will create opportunities for children and young adults; the amendment also addresses the

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growing needs of low-income communities and the long-term unemployed. These increases are paid for by reducing the tax cuts for taxpayers with incomes above \$1 million.

Similarly, the Spratt substitute presents a solid alternative that provides sustained increases for key priorities such as education and training programs, rejects cuts to the Medicaid program, *and* will achieve a balanced budget by 2012. In addition, it provides for the same meaningful two-sided pay-as-you-go (PAYGO) rule that was instrumental in turning the deficits in the 1990s into record surpluses. This approach charts a more responsible and sensible course for us to follow and should be supported by the full House.

Again, I urge you to support the Obey amendment, oppose H. Con. Res. 95, the FY 2006 Budget Resolution, and support the Spratt substitute.

Thank you for considering our views on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Kristor Cowan
Director, Department of Legislation