AFSCME’s Federal Budget Priorities – Fall 2017

The federal budget is at the center of the nation’s most important economic policy choices. The budget decisions made by Congress each year, spanning both investments and revenues, are vital to ensuring that the economy is strong and that our communities are safe and prosperous. This year, the stakes are even higher with radical spending and tax cuts included in both the congressional joint budget resolution and the President’s budget. These spending cuts come after several years of budget austerity, during which Congress slashed essential public services that we all count on, such as education, transportation, law enforcement, social services, community development, and more. In fact, many public services have been cut by one-third since the end of the Great Recession, when 8.7 million jobs were lost.

AFSCME rejects these draconian budgets and supports funding and tax policies that will create better economic opportunities to benefit all Americans, not just the wealthy few. Strong, reliable revenues and robust investments are necessary to improve public services. Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security and other entitlements must not be weakened. Rather than tax cuts, corporations and the wealthy should be made to pay their fair share. AFSCME urges Congress to take the following steps.

Increase Investments in Public Services

The fiscal year (FY) 2018 budget approved by Congress would cut from federal spending more than $5 trillion on non-defense programs over the next decade, a key source of funding for services carried out by state and local governments. The deep budget cuts combined with tax cuts proposed by the President would make it difficult for working families to find and keep good jobs, and reliable healthcare, to send their children to high-quality public schools and to afford higher education, and to save for retirement. The budget cuts would harm critical infrastructure needs, such as roads, bridges, transit, public housing and water and sewer systems. The budget cuts would make our communities and workplaces less safe. AFSCME urges Congress to pass funding bills with robust investments in public services for FY 2018 to enable state and local governments to deliver vital services.

Oppose New Tax Cuts for the Rich and Big Corporations

Our rigged and broken tax system lets big corporations and the wealthy avoid paying their fair share of taxes, sticking the rest of us with the tab. Our tax system should be more progressive. It should raise sufficient revenues to support good jobs and make the needed investments for children, families, seniors, and our communities. AFSCME urges Congress to make profitable corporations and the wealthy pay their fair share of taxes so we can build an economy that works for all of us.

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO

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Protect Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security and Other Entitlement Programs

Entitlement programs such as Medicaid, Medicare and Social Security form the backbone of our nation’s social safety net. Medicare and Medicaid enable older Americans, children, people with disabilities, and struggling families to have access to necessary health care services. The Affordable Care Act (ACA) provides tax credits allowing low- and middle-income families to purchase health coverage when it is not available through their job. Social Security provides economic security for older Americans and those with disabilities. SNAP (food stamps) ensures that families have essential nutrition in times of need. Our federal budget should uphold these commitments. **AFSCME urges Congress to reject cuts to Medicaid, Medicare, the ACA, Social Security, SNAP and other vital safety net programs.**

Provide Relief from Arbitrary Spending Limits

Tight budget caps and across-the-board cuts have hurt the economy and prevented Congress from addressing urgent investment needs. Non-defense spending is 13 percent lower than 2010 levels, adjusted for inflation, not because there is any less need for public services but simply because of arbitrary caps. **AFSCME urges Congress to reject the tight budget caps and increase domestic spending to support good jobs and to improve the economy. We also urge Congress to reject cuts in domestic spending to pay for increases in defense spending.**

End Political Gamesmanship Over the Budget

Spending bills should not include harmful and unpopular policy provisions that cannot be approved through the normal legislative process. The practice of tacking these ideologically driven “riders” into must-pass legislation has been used to attack middle-class and worker protections including overtime pay, collective bargaining rights and protections for workers’ retirement investments. **AFSCME urges Congress to oppose the hijacking of must-pass spending bills to force enactment of unrelated, controversial policy riders.**

As decisions about the federal budget are made, AFSCME urges that the needs of working families, and those who struggle at the margins be made the priority of Congress.

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