



## AFSCME'S FEDERAL BUDGET PRIORITIES

**The federal budget is at the center of the nation's most important economic policy choices.** The budget decisions made by Congress each year are vital to ensuring that the economy is strong and that our communities are safe and prosperous. This year, the stakes are even higher as Congress considers radical spending cuts proposed by President Trump. In the budget blueprint released in March, the President proposed to cut an unprecedented \$54 billion from federal spending on nondefense programs – a source of funding for services carried out by state and local governments. These cuts would come after several years of budget austerity, during which the Congress ratcheted down spending on essential public services that we all count on, such as education, transportation, law enforcement, social services, community development, public health, 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.

In his inaugural address, President Trump pledged to help “struggling families all across our land.” But his proposed budget fails to include the investments needed to grow our economy and create the conditions that give rise to good paying jobs. Instead, this budget would impose draconian cuts in needed investments and would decimate public services carried out by state and local governments. For the families who struggle to make ends meet and build a future for their children, President Trump’s budget is a broken promise.

**AFSCME supports a federal budget that creates better economic opportunities to benefit all Americans, not just the wealthy few.** New investments are needed 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 the Congress to take the following steps.

### 1. Set New Budget Priorities that Invest in Public Services and Create Jobs

President Trump has proposed \$54 billion in spending cuts for nondefense programs for the year beginning October 1. In addition, he has proposed \$18 billion in cuts for public services for the current fiscal year. These cuts would make it harder for working families to find good jobs and send their kids to college or a quality public school. The budget cuts would allow further degradation of critical infrastructure 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 the Congress to reject the harmful Trump budget cuts. We also urge the Congress to approve full-year budgets that reduce uncertainty for the state and local governments that carry out public services.**

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

## **2. Eliminate Arbitrary Budget Caps**

Tight budget caps and across-the-board cuts have hurt the economy and have prevented the Congress from addressing urgent investment needs. Former Congressional Budget Office (CBO) Director Doug Elmendorf said these caps are “damaging to the economy in the long term because they’re reducing federal investment in the form of infrastructure, education and training, and support for R&D, to the point where the federal investments will be a smaller share of GDP (the economy) than at any point in the last half century within a couple of years.” This fiscal austerity contributes to higher unemployment and greater income inequality. **AFSCME urges Congress to reject the tight budget caps and increase domestic spending that will grow jobs and improve the economy. We also urge the Congress to reject cuts in domestic spending to pay for increases in defense spending.**

## **3. 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” onto must-pass legislation has been attempted to reduce overtime pay, undermine collective bargaining and weaken financial protections for workers’ retirement savings accounts. A spending bill was successfully used to enact a measure allowing the wealthy to make larger political contributions. **AFSCME urges Congress to oppose the hijacking of must-pass spending bills to force enactment of unrelated, controversial policy riders.**

## **4. Oppose New Tax Cuts**

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 and raise enough revenue to grow good jobs and make the investments we need in public education, infrastructure and meeting the needs of children, families, seniors, and our communities. **AFSCME urges Congress to make profitable corporations and the wealthy pay more in taxes than they pay now, to build an economy that works for all of us.**

## **5. 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 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.**

In sum, 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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