AFSCME’s Federal Budget Priorities

The federal budget reflects the nation’s most important economic priorities. The budget decisions for both investments and revenues made by Congress each year can ensure that the economy is stable and strong, our communities are safe and prosperous, and public services can operate reliably. Federal funding is responsible for more than 30 percent of state budgets, and more than 20 percent of state and local budgets combined. In recent years, federal funding for many state and local discretionary grant programs has failed to keep pace with inflation or the needs of our growing population. The resulting austerity is harming communities. Further, the administration continues to propose deep cuts to basic needs programs that help struggling families and seniors with food assistance, Medicare, Medicaid, housing and more. Adequate investments, fair assistance policies and progressive revenues are urgently needed to meet needs.

Our nation’s budget should prioritize working and retired families, create good jobs, improve our crumbling infrastructure and provide critical public services that benefit all Americans, not just the wealthy few. Strong, reliable revenues and robust investments are necessary to improve public services. AFSCME urges Congress to take the following steps:

Increase Investments in Public Services

Federal grants to state and local governments play a critical role in funding health care, public education and child care, job training, nutrition assistance, housing assistance, infrastructure, public safety, community development, and other critical government functions that build strong communities. AFSCME supports renewed federal investments in public services that strengthen our communities and reflect the needs of working families. AFSCME also urges Congress to support a comprehensive infrastructure plan that improves roads, bridges, transit, schools and water systems. The plan should grow our economy, create good jobs, invest in communities, promote public health, and enable workers to have a strong voice on the job.

Provide Relief From Arbitrary Spending Limits

Tight budget caps and across-the-aboard cuts have hurt the economy and prevented Congress from addressing urgent investment needs. Non-defense discretionary (NDD) spending is well below 2010 levels, adjusted for inflation, because of arbitrary caps. AFSCME urges Congress to reject the budget cap of $542 billion, which would result in a $55 billion cut of 9 percent. Instead, we urge Congress to adopt the House-deemed level of $631 billion to allow for needed investments.
Protect Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security and Other Entitlement Programs

Programs such as Medicaid, Medicare, the Affordable Care Act (ACA), Social Security, and SNAP 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 ACA provides tax credits allowing low- and middle-income families to purchase health coverage when it is not available through their jobs. Social Security provides economic security for older Americans and those with disabilities. SNAP (food stamps) ensure 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.**

Increase the Debt Limit

It is absolutely essential to the national economy that an extension of the debt limit be approved and not held hostage to unreasonable demands, such as arbitrary spending reductions or an unnecessary border wall. Failure to raise the debt limit would have serious consequences for the nation and all Americans. Defaulting on debt obligations would lead to skyrocketing interest rates and borrowing costs, declining home values and reduced retirement savings. **AFSCME urges Congress to pass a clean extension of the debt limit.**

Increase Progressive Revenues

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 and depriving the country of revenues needed for public investment. Our tax system should be more progressive. It should raise sufficient revenues to support good jobs and to make 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 us all.**

*Federal Government Affairs*  
*June 11, 2019*