

The House of Representatives has spent the last two weeks debating legislation that will cut programs such as food stamp programs, student aid, Medicaid and other assistance programs that help to keep families and children out of poverty. For what reason? I believe the clear purpose of the cuts is to make room in the federal budget for additional tax cuts for the very wealthiest Americans.

Every spring, Congress passes a budget resolution that serves as a road map for how funds will be distributed throughout the government. This resolution identifies areas of the budget where changes in spending and revenue policy can be implemented via a reconciliation package that traditionally passes in the fall. This year the budget resolution called for cutting \$35 billion from mandatory spending programs while enacting \$70 billion dollars in tax cuts. In order to achieve the goal of reducing spending, the committees of jurisdiction submitted to the Budget Committee proposed cuts totaling approximately \$50 billion. Instead of distributing these cuts evenly across the government, the reconciliation cuts predominately target social assistance programs, knocking the chair out from under families fighting to stay out of poverty.

You may be interested to know that I made the following two statements (at two different times) on the floor of the House of Representatives in opposition to the reconciliation bill:

Mr. Speaker, the Budget Committee's reconciliation bill is a vicious example of misguided fiscal and social priorities. To pay for tax cuts that benefit almost exclusively those whose income is over \$200,000 a year, the bill cuts assistance to families struggling to get by and pushes them right into poverty. The bill guarantees that more foster children will grow up in poverty. \$4.9 billion is slashed from child support services alone. As a result, single mothers and their children will not receive the support payments owed to them and many of those children will grow up in poverty. And \$844 million cut from food stamps will push another 300,000 children and adults in low-income and immigrant families below the poverty threshold. One in five children in this country already grow up in poverty. It is unconscionable to deliberately increase this number. And for what? So that the wealthiest 3% of Americans can have another huge tax cut.

Mr. Speaker, tomorrow's reconciliation bill is a reckless attack on our students attending college. Basically the bill burdens students from low and middle income families with more than 33% higher debt to pay for tax cuts that benefit almost exclusively those whose income is over \$200,000 a year. This bill cuts \$14.3 billion from student aid by increasing interest rates and taxes on loans and charging students new fees. The cost of college is sky rocketing and already leaves the average student \$17, 500 in debt. This bill would increase that debt by 33%. Many low and middle income students will no longer be able to afford college and their lifetime earning power will be reduced. Under the reconciliation bill at least 4 students are going to start their careers burden with added debt in order to pay for each millionaire's tax cut. And all this is being done so that the wealthiest 3% of Americans can have another huge tax cut.

In addition to the cuts discussed in my statements, the budget reconciliation increases the cost of health care for low and middle income families through a \$11.4 billion reduction in Medicaid programs. States may be forced to cut programs that guarantee 6 million children access to preventive health care such as the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment service. Under this package, 3 out of every 4 dollars in Medicaid cuts are borne directly by

individuals who are poor or disabled.

But the most insulting aspect of the reconciliation package is the fact that it is being touted as a fiscally responsible plan to reduce the budget. This is in blatant contradiction with reality. The tax cuts portion of the reconciliation package is expected to reduce revenue by at least \$60 billion dollars, ensuring that the reconciliation package will actually increase the deficit. Furthermore, these tax cuts will not ease the pain felt by low and middle income families as a result of the spending cuts, but will instead benefit primarily the wealthiest Americans.

Unfortunately, the House passed the spending cuts portion of the reconciliation package on November 18, 2005 without my support. The tax reduction portion of the bill is expected to be debated when Congress reconvenes in December. Additionally, the House and Senate will conference in order to address differences between the two bodies' bills before the spending and tax cuts are signed into law.

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