



**Wider  
Opportunities  
for Women**

## **House Committee Budget Fails Women and Elders**

### **Statement by Wider Opportunities for Women**

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The budget plan unveiled by President Obama yesterday represents an important step in the right direction for securing the economic well-being of women and their families. The “Obama budget” plan, as well as the House Democratic and Progressive alternatives, stand in stark contrast to the punitive and short sighted proposal from the House Budget Committee that is expected on the floor today.

Government programs play a necessary and critical role in the lives of all Americans, and particularly women who deliver and benefit from most of the affected services. Caring for children and seniors is a primary role for women at home and, for many, also on their jobs.

For example women are over 80 percent of teaching personnel, nurses, and child care and home-care providers. In housing, three-fourths of the households receiving assistance are headed by women.

The House Republican budget contains substantially larger spending cuts in these and many other services in order to pay for the tax breaks it gives to the wealthy. WOW commends the President for including new revenues and taxes. However, we believe that revenue increases should more than equal the spending cuts to achieve deficit reduction. Women, most of who are struggling for economic security, by and large are *not* among the millionaires who would see their taxes rise as a result of President Obama’s promise to end the Bush-era tax cuts.

The House Budget Committee plan would be particularly devastating to older women and men, disabled persons and the poor who receive Medicare and Medicaid. Block granting and cutting Medicaid will raise the cost and lower the quality of nursing homes and in-home care. The House budget’s proposal to replace Medicare with a set voucher will act as a \$6,000 tax on elders when they go to buy insurance from private companies. Furthermore, this action will setback the strides made by in the Affordable Care Act last year to strengthen the program and curb rising costs.

WOW’s Elder Economic Security Standard™ Index shows that even with the current Medicare program, out-of-pocket costs for those in good health consume a major share (18 %) of the monthly budget for individuals age 65 and older.

In general, women will bear the brunt of spending reductions in discretionary services across the board, including those in child care, education, skill training, employment and work experience programs, aging services, and all the other discretionary programs that are now at new lows after the historic \$38 billion

cut in the continuing resolution. These are not handouts but essential public services that need to be in place in order for Americans and the economy to thrive.

An arbitrary, across-the board cap on spending for years into the future, would make all income support programs, including Unemployment Insurance and food stamps, unable to expand to meet rising need during emergencies such as the recent recession. Thankfully, the President avoided this straight jacket approach in his speech yesterday.

In a separate proposal, three Republicans yesterday introduced a proposal to cut Social Security benefits. Older women who have spent their working lives lifting patients and flipping mattresses should not be expected to postpone retirement until age 70, as their plan suggested. WOW has maintained that Social Security should be treated separately from the budget deficit and should not reduce benefits for any present or future beneficiaries.

The American people have paid into Medicare and Social Security and have every right to expect the benefits promised when they need them. The House Budget Committee proposal would violate this trust and the ability of all Americans to fulfill their potential.

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