



**Wider
Opportunities
for Women**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 19, 2011

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House Budget Cuts Will Intensify Economic Vulnerability for Millions of Already Hard-Hit Families and Seniors

Impact on Low-Income Workers and Seniors Detailed by Direct Service Providers Nationwide

WASHINGTON, DC – The budget passed by the US House of Representatives today will cost jobs and weaken the already tenuous ability of millions of low-income families and older Americans to achieve economic security, according to [Wider Opportunities for Women](#) (WOW) a national organization dedicated to building pathways to economic independence for America's families, women, and girls. WOW called on the Senate to take a fundamentally different approach to the budget that protects the employment, nutrition and other vital services low-income families and seniors rely on.

"The bill [zeroes out](#) virtually all funding for Department of Labor job training programs this year, from YouthBuild to on-the job training for older workers," said WOW Executive Director Joan Kuriansky.

"The most vulnerable people in America are going to be hit the hardest," Kuriansky said. "These irresponsible cuts will kill jobs and devastate low- and middle-income families and seniors at a time when they are already struggling to make ends meet. The continuing resolution cuts focus on non-security discretionary programs that make up 12 percent of the entire federal budget."

House budget knives slashed the federal budget by \$65 billion, including a 44 percent cut in the Community Services Block Grant program, which provides nutrition, employment, health and other vital services that help low-income workers move into the middle class.

"The community services block grants undergird virtually every program offered by community action agencies, frequently supporting staff positions for other programs that lack funding for administrative support," said Ron Gilbert, Executive Director of the Alabama Community Action

Agency. “As we dig out of this recession, cuts to community services slow the recovery process in the states by leading to job cuts at the state and local levels.”

Another critical area cut in the House budget is the Low-Income Heating Assistance Program (LIHEAP), which millions of families depend on to stay warm in winter. Despite increased need for heating assistance, House members voted to decrease the LIHEAP contingency fund by over 65 percent. Decrease LIHEAP funding could mean increased enrollment in other basic needs programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), that already have overstretched budgets.

“Low-income Americans are forced to make impossible choices when services that allow them to meet their basic needs are unavailable,” said Gilbert. “The loss of these funds in the next year will leave tens of thousands of Alabamians facing escalating utility bills, and having to make hard decisions about whether to heat their home or provide food for their families.”

Paul Downey knows the critical nature of senior housing options. As President of Senior Community Centers, a direct service provider, he sees a growing need for subsidized housing in the San Diego community. The House’s budget voted to cut funding to the Section 202 senior housing program by 67 percent, despite the fact seniors who qualify already spend an average of two years on the waiting list. Furthermore, WOW’s Elder Economic Security Standard™ Index shows that housing is the highest cost component for seniors in good health whether they rent or own, with a senior renter needing \$20, 326 a year to make ends meet.

“Slashing affordable housing alternatives for those who cannot afford to pay a mortgage or cover the full cost of rent is irresponsible when millions of low-income working Americans continue to feel the harsh effects of the recession,” said Kuriansky. “Fewer government-supported housing opportunities for seniors means the burden of care will fall on Baby Boomers to take care of their parents, and it will force more elders to find shelter in nursing homes or on the streets increasing pressure on the already stretched Medicaid budget.”

Kuriansky added, “From cradle to grave, these cuts drastically curtail programs that support economic opportunity and security – early childhood education through Head Start, career and technical education, Pell grants for college students, job and basic educational skills training, transportation projects that create jobs for unemployed workers and also at the same time support affordable transportation options for seniors and others with limited mobility. These proposed cuts will undermine the economic recovery, place new strains on the federal budget harming vulnerable Americans’ long-term ability to achieve economic security and move into the middle class. We must think through successful ways to raise revenues to support the programs that mean the most to millions of American families.”