



**National
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The Ryan Budget Is a Path to Economic Disaster

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"Affluent Americans would do quite well. But for tens of millions of others, the Ryan plan is a path to more adversity." Robert Greenstein, President of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

In the same week that we marked the 46th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and learned that 7.1 million Americans had enrolled in the Affordable Care Act, House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan introduced a draconian 2015 budget plan that increases military spending through 2024 by \$483 billion – to pre-sequester levels, yet cuts non-defense spending by \$791 billion. This illogical plan proposes to repeal the Affordable Care Act, end Medicare as we know it, and slash critical safety-net programs, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (or SNAP – formerly food stamps), Head Start and Pell Grants. It is ironic that a plan called the "Path to Prosperity" is nothing more than a path to political grandstanding and partisanship that has no place among constructive efforts focused on real prosperity for all Americans – not a select few.

At a time when Americans are looking to Washington for solutions to the problems of income inequality and the ever-increasing Great Divide, the Ryan budget goes in the opposite direction. Rather than closing the gaps, it exacerbates the problems by raising taxes an average of \$2000 for middle-class families with children, according to the Office of Management and Budget, while giving the wealthiest taxpayers a break by lowering their taxes from 39.6 percent to 25 percent. The Economic Policy Institute (EPI) estimates that the "prosperity proposal" would result in the loss of three million jobs over the next couple of years, thereby reversing the gradual upward trend in job creation. In short, the Ryan budget, while not surprising in its familiar ideology or fanciful push towards austerity, represents the height of irresponsibility and is a blueprint for disaster for millions of hard-working Americans. It has immediately, and rightfully, drawn widespread condemnation.

Ethan Pollack, Senior Policy Analyst with the non-partisan Economic Policy Institute concluded that much like the budget Ryan proposed last year, this one burdens seniors, the disabled, and children – while cutting taxes for the rich. "Tax cuts for people who don't need them and

economic insecurity for everyone else is grossly irresponsible budget and economic policy," he added.

The non-profit Center on Budget and Policy Priorities reports that "Some 69 percent of the cuts in House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan's new budget would come from programs that serve people of limited means. These disproportionate cuts...contrast sharply with the budget's rhetoric about helping the poor and promoting opportunity."

The Center for American Progress called Ryan's plan "the same conservative, top-down policies that have failed the nation's middle and working-class families, seniors, and the economy," while the New York Times called it "Destructive to the country's future."

Thankfully, spending for the next two years was set by the budget agreement passed in the Senate and the House and signed by President Obama in December 2013. So it is unlikely that the Ryan budget will become law in the short-term or is for anything more than show. Nonetheless, it is a dangerous "vision" for our nation. The National Urban League strongly rejects this budget because of its likely destructive impact on employment, the economy and poverty. We urge Paul Ryan and his colleagues to drop this plan and get serious about developing a responsible budget that does not depend on hurting millions of working and middle-class Americans to benefit the richest few.

I would expect that Rep. Ryan would be more conscious of the critical need to accomplish this, especially as this year's State of Black America® report and the new Black-White Metropolitan Equality Index™ finds that three of the five least equal cities in America for unemployment and two of the five least equal cities for income are in his home state of Wisconsin (Minneapolis, Milwaukee, and Madison; and Milwaukee and Minneapolis, respectively). With an equality index of 23.8 percent (on a 100-point scale), Madison ranked at the bottom for Black-white unemployment (18.5% vs. 4.4%). With an equality index of 40.3 percent, Minneapolis ranked at the bottom for Black-white median household income (\$28,784 vs. \$71,376).

The night before Dr. King's April 4, 1968 assassination, he said:

"The question is not, if I stop to help this man in need, what will happen to me? The question is, if I do not stop to help the sanitation workers, what will happen to them?...Let us move on in these powerful days, these days of challenge to make America what it ought to be. We have an opportunity to make America a better nation."

We can start now by stopping the Ryan budget – and even more importantly, stopping its budget-cutting fever that threatens the economic health and recovery of our nation.

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