

Today, the new House Republican majority brought their budget proposal for Fiscal Year 2012 to the House floor for a vote. While I share in the belief that we need to reduce our nation's deficit, I sharply disagree with their proposal for doing so. Their plan would hurt America's seniors by targeting Medicare and Medicaid, hurt our students by cutting investments in education, and hurt our economy by eliminating investments in clean energy sources that will help us compete with countries like China and Germany and reduce our dependence on oil.

To be clear: their budget would end Medicare as we know it; it would gut Medicaid; and it would put in place a trigger to cut Social Security almost immediately.

Under the guise of reform, the Republican plan would turn Medicare into a voucher program for seniors to buy private insurance, shifting more costs to seniors and their families. According to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, this budget plan would raise out-of-pocket health care costs for seniors by nearly \$7,000 per year. It should be noted that not one dollar of this increase in costs will go towards reducing our deficit – it all goes to the private plans that seniors would be required to buy.

[In fact, the Congressional Budget Office has said that their plan would not balance the budget until 2040!](#)

The plan would also gut Medicaid by converting it into a block grant system. By drastically reducing the federal funding for Medicaid, and putting more of a burden on states, Medicaid would be severely impacted, and seniors and people with disabilities hit the hardest. Doctors, hospitals, and nursing homes would begin to withdraw from Medicaid, because states will likely have to cut already-low payment rates. This would lead to reduced access to health care and long-term care services for seniors.

Destroying Medicare and Medicaid is irresponsible and shortsighted. In Sacramento, 94 percent of seniors use Medicare to pay for their doctors and to get the care they need. Additionally, 17 percent of Sacramento seniors receive Medicaid, which allows them to stay in a nursing home if they need to; and 15 percent receive both Medicare and Medicaid. The problem is not with these programs, that serve so many in Sacramento, but with the rising costs of health care in America.

Those rising costs are exactly what the health care law enacted last year is designed to alleviate. When the law is fully implemented, consumers will enjoy an unprecedented level of protection from some of the insurance industry's worst practices, as well as new benefits to help lower costs and keep you healthier. But the Majority's plan – in addition to targeting Medicare and Medicaid - would also repeal the health care law, including popular provisions like closing the Medicare Part D prescription drug coverage gap, banning insurance companies from dropping people for having pre-existing conditions, free preventive care for seniors, and allowing parents to keep their children on their plan through age 26.

The Republican budget also attacks Social Security – a program which we have all paid into over the course of our working lives, and deserve to have the promise kept that this money be paid back to us in our later years. The budget would raise the retirement age, and cut future Social Security benefits for everyone who earns more than \$27,000 a year. We all know that Social Security has not added a dime to the deficit; and creating barriers for our seniors to have access to the retirement plans that they have spent their working lives paying into just does not make fiscal sense.

I recorded a video message to highlight my concern that this plan would hurt America's seniors. You can watch it by clicking [here](#) .

But this budget plan is not just bad for our seniors, our disabled, and our low-income or middle class families – it is also destructive to our students. Access to affordable higher education is something that we desperately need to invest in, in order to stay competitive and support our economic growth.

The Majority's budget is not a plan to deal with rising tuition costs, but rather a destruction of some of our most efficient, most popular programs that help students and their parents afford to pay for college. For instance, Pell Grants would be cut for 9.4 million students next year, and as many as 1 million students would be kicked out of the program altogether. In Sacramento, over 28,000 students are benefiting from Pell Grants this year alone. Cutting this vital, effective program would mean significantly fewer students would be able to afford college next year, and in the years to come.

Additionally, nationwide, 218,000 low-income children and families would be removed from the

Head Start program, and 55,000 Head Start teachers and staff would lose their jobs. Head Start is a program supported by the federal government that gives families basic health care and childcare services when they have nowhere else to turn. These families cannot afford health care on their own, and we cannot afford to turn our backs on them.

The Majority's budget plan does however look out for some people. In fact, the plan would give historically large tax breaks to the same companies who are making record profits – including those who are shipping jobs overseas, and helped put us in the economic situation in which we currently find ourselves. It would also give Big Oil even larger subsidies. House Republicans are looking out for corporate interests over the middle class, seniors, and average American families, all the while gambling away America's future.

I want you to know that I will not stand for this. I will continue to fight against drastic cuts to Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security, while insisting on investments in education, clean energy, and our infrastructure. Supporting American companies who are making American-made products and goods – specifically in growing sectors like clean technology – would create jobs that stay here in America, and reduce our nation's dependence on oil. The [Make it in America](#) agenda that I have supported would help us do just that. By investing in the domestic manufacturing industry, we can reduce our nation's trade deficit, create American jobs, and tap into the innovation and ingenuity that we as Americans have come to expect of ourselves.

I know that cutting benefits for Sacramento's seniors, cutting education for Sacramento's students, and cutting investments in Sacramento's clean energy sector will hamper our economic recovery. That is why I voted against the Republican budget plan today, and will continue to advocate for practical cuts that reflect our priorities. In order for America to remain competitive, innovative, and a global leader, we must make responsible choices that support the middle class, our seniors, our students, and our economy.