



INCOME SECURITY

## PRESIDENT TRUMP'S "SKINNY BUDGET": PUTTING FAMILIES LAST

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Putting America first means more than just guns, ships, and tanks. It means putting people and families first. But that's not what President Donald Trump does in his "skinny budget."

President Trump's "skinny budget," a top-line version of his first budget request to Congress for fiscal year (FY) 2018,<sup>1</sup> tackles only one-third of the overall budget but clearly reveals the Administration's disturbing priorities. Instead of prioritizing the needs of families, President Trump's skinny budget represents an attack on all fronts—from crushing the public education system to slashing support for affordable housing to eliminating funding for meals for seniors to undermining the functions of the agencies that keep women and their families safe, healthy, and free from discrimination. By eviscerating funding for the programs and agencies that are essential to millions in order to prioritize unwarranted increases in defense spending and a pointless wall along our southern border, President Trump would make families less healthy, less economically secure, and less safe.

Given the track record of the Trump administration to date, the attacks reflected in the skinny budget are hardly surprising. Just a little more than 50 days into his presidency, President Trump has pushed policies that would harm families in multiple ways. From repealing the Affordable Care Act (ACA) to separating immigrant families to rescinding guidance clarifying the rights of transgender children, President Trump's policies—those he has carried out and those he has proposed—fail to celebrate and support our nation's diverse families. Instead, they are a betrayal of President Trump's promise to be a "president for all Americans."

All families deserve dignity, respect, and support in achieving the American dream—but the budget the Trump Administration has outlined would hurt families that do not resemble his own: poor families, immigrant families, minority families, families headed by women, families with children in public school, and more.

### Putting America First Starts with Families

A budget that works for families must prioritize the needs of vulnerable people; expand economic opportunity for everyone; and secure new revenue from those with the greatest ability to contribute.<sup>2</sup> President Trump's budget outline does none of the above.

The skinny budget contains far less detail than a full budget proposal, and is completely silent on taxes and mandatory spending (i.e., funding for programs like Medicaid, Medicare and Social Security), which together account for about two-thirds of the federal budget. Instead, it focuses on just the one-third known as discretionary spending, which refers to the defense and non-defense programs for which Congress must approve funding each year. Yet even this sketchy outline of one small piece of the budget is sufficient to make clear that the Trump Administration is far more concerned with tearing families apart at the border than helping struggling families get ahead.

Specifically, President Trump proposes cutting \$15 billion in the remainder of FY 2017 and a massive \$54 billion in FY 2018 to the funding available for non-defense discretionary ("NDD") programs, which includes funding for programs such as Head Start, child care assistance, K-12 education, job training, and domestic violence prevention as well as food safety, environmental protection, transportation, and medical research. Under current law—which includes automatic "sequestration" cuts, for which Congress has acted to lessen the impact in recent years,<sup>3</sup> but not for FY 2018—funding for NDD programs is already on track to reach the lowest level since 1962.<sup>4</sup> Because there is no sequestration relief in effect for FY 2018, additional funding is needed to help,



for example, repair water treatment infrastructure to avoid poisoning our children and maintain housing assistance as rents rise.<sup>5</sup> The funding cuts proposed by President Trump would do exactly the opposite: by piling deep cuts on top of years of austerity—amounting to a cumulative cut to NDD programs of nearly one-third since 2010<sup>6</sup>—the President’s budget would further undermine the security of the most vulnerable families by displacing families from their homes, eliminating support that low-income households need to afford to heat and cool their homes in extreme weather conditions, cutting job training programs, eliminating funding for meals for seniors in need, polluting our air and water, and advancing a strategy that will make families less safe at home and abroad.

### **Harming low-income families**

Throughout the budget, President Trump proposes cutting, and in many instances terminating, programs that are essential to low-income families and women, particularly women of color.<sup>7</sup> For instance, he proposes:

- **Eliminating the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)**, which provided energy assistance to approximately 6.3 million low-income households in 2014.<sup>8</sup> Without LIHEAP, millions of families would have to choose between keeping a house warm during cold winter months or buying food.
- **Eliminating federal funding for Meals on Wheels**, which serves meals to 2.4 million seniors, including 500,000 veterans, each year. Nearly two-thirds of seniors served are women.<sup>9</sup> President Trump proposes eliminating the Community Development Block Grant, which provides federal funding for Meals on Wheels.
- **Eliminating the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)**, which funds community-based organizations to fight poverty and revitalize communities through a broad range of programs and services to low-income Americans, including emergency services and programs to support education, employment, housing, nutrition, and health. In FY 2016, organizations funded by CSBG served 15.6 million individuals.<sup>10</sup>
- **Eliminating a range of job training programs** designed to help people obtain the skills they need to secure better jobs and support their families.
- **Eliminating the Legal Services Corporation**, which would leave low-income families with little place to turn to obtain civil legal assistance.
- **Eliminating critical housing programs** that help families in the nation’s poorest rural and urban neighborhoods, including the HOME Investment Partnerships Program, Choice Neighborhoods, and the Self-Help Homeownership Opportunity Program.

The skinny budget does not account for the impact of enacting the House Republican proposal to repeal and replace the ACA. But President Trump has praised this disastrous plan to leave 24 million people uninsured<sup>11</sup>—and his budget slashes funding for the agency overseeing the ACA, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The \$15.1 billion cut to the overall HHS budget, which represents a nearly 18 percent decrease from FY 2017 enacted levels,<sup>12</sup> further threatens the health and well-being of families and particularly that of women.<sup>13</sup>

In addition, while President Trump has indicated an interest in helping families through measures such as improving access to affordable child care, it is unclear how programs critical to the nation’s child care infrastructure—the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) and Head Start—would fare under Trump’s budget. HHS also administers these programs, and the budget document identifies early care and education as one of HHS’s “highest priorities.” However, the budget does not address either CCDBG or Head Start directly, and it is hard to reconcile adequate funding for CCDBG and Head Start with the massive cut to the agency that administers them. Even if CCDBG and Head Start are spared from cuts, it is highly unlikely that the proposed budget would leave room to meet the vast unmet need: currently, fewer than one in six children eligible for child care assistance receives it,<sup>14</sup> and Head Start serves less than half of eligible preschool-age children and only about 5 percent of eligible infants and toddlers.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, even if a low-income family is able to retain their child care assistance through CCDBG or keep their child in a Head Start program, that same family is at risk of losing access to after-school care for their school-age children (see “Dismantling public education” below) as well as their health care, heating assistance, and housing as a result of the Administration’s proposals.

### **Dismantling public education**

President Trump proposes slashing \$9 billion from the Department of Education, a 13 percent reduction from FY 2017. Such a dramatic decrease threatens many of the critical services performed by the Department of Education, including the Office for Civil Rights, which serves the vital mission of ensuring equal access to education and enforcing Title IX and other antidiscrimination laws. He also proposes eliminating the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, which supports after-school learning and enrichment activities for 1.6 million children,<sup>16</sup> and reducing the Federal-Work Study program, which is critical in helping students afford college through work opportunities.

At the same time that he is proposing dramatic cuts to the Department of Education, President Trump proposes pouring \$168 million into charter schools, creating a new program that would give \$250 million in taxpayer money to private schools, and another \$1 billion to steer money



away from poorer schools into wealthier school districts. This undermines public education, especially in the hands of Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, who has refused to commit to keeping public schools public.<sup>17</sup> Secretary DeVos also opposes commonsense oversight of charter schools and private schools,<sup>18</sup> which could allow charters and private schools to ignore the accountability standards and civil rights protections that apply in public schools, putting schoolchildren at risk.

### ***Weakening protections for working people***

While President Trump has styled himself as a champion of the American worker, he proposes a 21 percent cut to the Department of Labor (DOL), which can be expected to hobble the agency's efforts to fulfill its core functions of ensuring that workers are kept safe, paid fairly, and protected from discrimination on the job. As noted above, several job training programs are targeted for elimination, but the specific cuts outlined in the budget make up only about half a billion dollars, while a total of \$2.5 billion in cuts are proposed for the Department.<sup>19</sup> This means that many other DOL programs are also likely to be sharply curtailed, from the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (which implements and enforces laws protecting employees of federal contractors from discrimination), to the Wage and Hour Division (which enforces minimum wage and overtime protections, the Family and Medical Leave Act, and requirements of break time for nursing mothers), to the Women's Bureau (which seeks to advance the interests of working women), to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (which seeks to protect workers' health and safety on the job).

### ***Eliminating jobs and undermining basic government functions***

The cuts proposed by President Trump undermine the government's very ability to serve the American people. By cutting a number of vital government agencies by close to 20 percent or more, President Trump is eliminating jobs—likely women's jobs in particular, as women represent the majority of the public sector workforce<sup>20</sup>—and impairing the ability of the government to perform basic functions that protect the rights, health, and safety of women and families across the country. For example, by slashing funding for the Environmental Protection Agency by nearly one-third, Trump's plan would eliminate a fifth of the agency's workforce, terminate programs dedicated to

researching and combating climate change, and severely hamper the EPA's ability to help ensure clean air and water in communities throughout the U.S.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, a 19 percent cut to the National Institutes of Health would severely curtail lifesaving medical research,<sup>22</sup> while continued cuts to the Internal Revenue Service would—as Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin has acknowledged—cost the government money by reducing tax collections.<sup>23</sup>

### ***Promoting fear and intolerance, not safety and security***

The brutal cuts to non-defense programs advanced by the skinny budget are designed to offset an equivalent increase of \$54 billion to defense spending in FY 2018. Yet this dramatic increase is not needed and may well make families less safe.

The United States already spends more on defense than the next seven nations combined.<sup>24</sup> But even as the budget further inflates that number, it dramatically cuts funding for the State Department and for diplomatic and foreign assistance programs—though Defense Secretary James Mattis has called the State Department and USAID “essential” to promoting American interests abroad and “preventing conflict and countering extremism.”<sup>25</sup>

In addition, the billions dedicated to building a wall along our southern border, estimated to cost approximately \$21.6 billion in total,<sup>26</sup> would serve little purpose<sup>27</sup> beyond erecting a powerful symbol that the Trump Administration does not value the contributions of immigrants and their families. This hateful message comes at a steep price, again demanding cuts from agencies and programs that provide vital services for all Americans. Slashing funding for the agencies that protect our highways and airspaces, combat disease, and safeguard our environment to push an anti-immigrant agenda sows fear in our communities and makes our nation less safe.

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American families deserve a president who can be president for all of us, not just some of us. The pattern of attacks on families that are not as lucky as President Trump's own family divides the country and makes millions less healthy, less safe, and less economically secure. Simply put, families deserve far more than the policies being proposed by the Trump Administration.



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- 12 The text of the Trump Administration's skinny budget states that HHS would be cut by \$15.1 billion, or nearly 18 percent below FY 2017 levels. However, Table 2 of the skinny budget states that HHS will be cut by \$12.6 billion, or 16.2 percent below FY 2017 levels. The reason for the discrepancy is unclear. See OFFICE OF MGMT. & BUDGET, *supra* note 1, at 21, 50.
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