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Executive Summary: House Republican Agendas and Project 2025 Would Increase Poverty and Hardship, Drive Up the Uninsured Rate, and Disinvest From People, Communities, and the Economy

By CBPP Staff[1]

Executive Summary

Over the last several months, groups of House Republicans and the Heritage Foundation have released policy agendas that, taken together, would create a harsher country with higher poverty and less opportunity, where millions of people would face higher costs for health care, child care, and housing, and millions more would lose health coverage — all while wealthy households and corporations benefit from an unfair tax code that provides them with outsized tax breaks. These skewed priorities would exacerbate inequities in income, wealth, health, and hardship across lines of race and ethnicity, widening already glaring differences that have their roots in racism and other forms of discrimination.

Looking at three proposals — the House Republican Study Committee's (RSC) budget plan, the Republican House Budget Committee's (HBC) budget resolution, and the Heritage Foundation's Project 2025 agenda — brings the implications of influential conservative policymakers' and a think tank's broader fiscal policy agenda into sharper focus. That agenda features:

- **Policies that raise costs and take away health coverage, food assistance, and other help affording the basics from people when they need them.** These policies will create significant economic and health insecurity for millions of people while increasing poverty, hardship, and the number of people lacking health coverage. They will shortchange children's futures, make it harder for millions of seniors to afford prescription drugs, and take away help that households need to afford food, housing, and child care.

  For example, the RSC budget calls for $4.5 trillion in cuts over ten years in Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), and Affordable Care Act (ACA) marketplace

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coverage,[2] cutting these health coverage funds by *more than half*. The HBC budget plan, meanwhile, calls for $2.2 trillion in cuts to health coverage — all from Medicaid, the associated committee report suggests.[3] This cut would amount to 30 percent on average over ten years, and 40 percent in 2034. Nearly 74 million people receive health coverage through Medicaid, so cuts of this magnitude would result in *millions* losing access to comprehensive coverage.

Similarly, the RSC budget calls for cutting average Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits by about 22 percent by rescinding the updated 2021 Thrifty Food Plan, which adjusted SNAP benefits to reflect the cost of a healthy diet based on today's dietary guidelines and food consumption patterns.[4] This cut would affect 41 million people participating in SNAP, formerly known as food stamps. (HBC and Project 2025 also sharply criticize the Thrifty Food Plan increase but are not clear about rescinding it.[5]) And Project 2025 calls for gutting summer food assistance programs that children in families with low incomes rely on when school is out, which could include the new Summer EBT program that is expected to provide grocery benefits to more than 21 million children this summer.[6]

The HBC budget plan cuts the "income security" category of programs by almost $1 trillion over ten years; the accompanying report targets SNAP, the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (or TANF, which provides flexible funding that states use for a range of benefits and services to low-income families with children). If income security cuts are largely limited to these programs, benefits would be slashed by more than half by 2034.[7]

The RSC budget has very deep cuts in this part of the budget as well. It includes a cut that would convert Supplemental Security Income (SSI), a 50-year-old program that provided

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[2] See pp. 96 and 176 of Republican Study Committee, "Fiscal Sanity to Save America: Republican Study Committee FY 2025 Budget Proposal" (hereinafter RSC budget proposal), March 20, 2024, https://hern.house.gov/uploadedfiles/final_budget_including_letter_word_doc-final_as_of_march_25.pdf. For a detailed analysis of the agendas' health proposals, see Allison Orris and Claire Heyison, "Republican Health Coverage Proposals Would Increase Number of Uninsured, Raise People's Costs," CBPP, September 3, 2024, https://www.cbpp.org/research/health/republican-health-coverage-proposals-would-increase-number-of-uninsured-raise.

[3] See pp. 11 and 44-45 of House of Representatives Committee on the Budget, "Concurrent Resolution on the Budget — Fiscal Year 2025, Report to Accompany H. Con. Res. 117" (hereinafter HBC report), report 118-568, June 27, 2024, https://www.congress.gov/congressional-report/118th-congress/house-report/568/1?outputFormat=pdf&s=1&r=4&q=%7B%22search%22%3A%22HCR+117%22%7D. CBPP calculations relative to Congressional Budget Office's (CBO) February 2024 baseline, available at CBO, "The Budget and Economic Outlook: 2024-2034," February 7, 2024, https://www.cbo.gov/publication/59710.

[4] See p. 42 of the RSC budget proposal.

[5] Heritage Foundation, "Mandate for Leadership" (hereinafter Project 2025), 2023, https://static.project2025.org/2025_MandateForLeadership_FULL.pdf, pp. 300-301; 118th Congress, Second Session, "H. Con. Res. 117 [Report No. 118–568]" (hereinafter HBC budget proposal), Section 412, June 27, 2024, https://www.congress.gov/118/bills/hconres117/BILLS-118hconres117rh.pdf.

[6] As with SNAP, the grocery benefits are distributed through a debit-style, electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card. For the proposal see pp. 303 of Project 2025.

[7] See pp. 11 and 52-53 of the HBC report. CBPP calculations are relative to CBO's February 2024 baseline, and take into account that some of the total savings in the income security category reflect cuts to civil service retirement, which is another program the HBC report targets.

income assistance to 7.5 million low-income seniors and disabled people in 2022, to a block grant and end guaranteed cash aid through the program.

Many of the proposals in these agendas would shift large costs onto states, forcing them to either kick in far more money — a particular hardship for states with lower per capita incomes — or cut benefits and services to their residents.

- **Massive disinvestment in public services,** which will limit opportunity, hurt communities, undermine efforts to address climate change, erode basic government functions, and damage the economy. For example, both the HBC and RSC budget plans call for enormous cuts in the part of the budget that funds a wide range of federal services, activities, and assistance — from education investments that build the skills of our future workforce, to transportation infrastructure that supports commerce and safety, to the nation's weather forecasting system and scientific and medical research. In addition, all three plans would repeal or let expire climate provisions of the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. And all three plans call for repealing the Inflation Reduction Act's groundbreaking investments in clean energy.[8]
- **A doubling down on skewed, expensive, and ineffective tax cuts.** The RSC and HBC budget plans call for extending all of the 2017 law's expiring individual income tax cuts,[9] which would cost nearly $4 trillion over ten years (2026-2035),[10] and making additional business tax breaks permanent, which would cost nearly a trillion more.[11] Project 2025 goes even further, calling for a host of new tax cuts for wealthy households and corporations, including for multinational corporations that use overseas tax havens. The HBC budget plan shows *none* of the costs of extending the expiring 2017 tax cuts in its budget figures, but creates a new procedure allowing unlimited tax cuts.[12]
- **Harsh treatment of immigrants,** hurting families, shortchanging children's futures, undermining immigrants' contributions to communities and the economy, and hurting the country as a whole. Project 2025, the RSC budget plan, and the HBC budget plan call for a host of harmful policies that would take help away from families that include immigrants when they fall on hard times. Among other proposals, these plans seek to frighten immigrants and their families from participating in the Census, paying their taxes, and receiving benefits for which they are eligible.[13]

Behind these eye-popping budget numbers are millions of real people who will see health coverage, food assistance, and other forms of support taken away. (See Figure 1.) This will make it

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[8] The climate provisions in the Inflation Reduction Act are primarily in the form of tax credits.

[9] See p. 29 of the RSC budget proposal and pp. 71-72 of the HBC report.

[10] CBPP estimates based on CBO estimates. See Congressional Budget Office, "Budgetary Outcomes Under Alternative Assumptions About Spending and Revenues," May 8, 2024, https://www.cbo.gov/publication/60114. We use the ten-year period 2026-2035 because extending the Trump tax cuts would reduce tax liability starting in 2026. And in 2025, when Congress will debate how to handle the scheduled expirations, it will be looking at the 2026-2035 ten-year budget window.

[11] Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, "TCJA Extension Could Add $4 to $5 Trillion to Deficits," June 13, 2024, https://www.crfb.org/blogs/tcja-extension-could-add-4-5-trillion-deficits#appendix.

[12] See Section 302 of the HBC budget proposal.

[13] See pp. 145 and 680 of Project 2025, pp. 84-85 of the RSC budget proposal, and pp. 52-53 of the HBC report.

even harder for them to afford the basics, leading to serious hardships such as homelessness or overcrowded living, food insecurity, hunger, and untreated health conditions.

FIGURE 1

Republican Policy Agendas Would Cut Swath of Crucial Benefits for Tens of Millions of People, Sell the Nation's Communities Far Short

Together, the Republican Study Committee (RSC) and House Budget Committee (HBC) plans and Project 2025 would:

Take away health coverage:

- from **tens of millions** of the nearly 74 million people with **Medicaid**, under HBC's 30 percent, 10-year cut (40 percent in 2034), and similar cuts in RSC and Project 2025.
- from **4 million people** who use premium tax credits to help them afford **ACA coverage**, if credit enhancements are allowed to expire (RSC and HBC). **Millions more would lose coverage** under the RSC plan to replace the credits with block grant funding to states.

Take away children's benefits:

- from **800,000 preschoolers, toddlers, and infants** who would lose early learning services under Project 2025's elimination of **Head Start**.
- from nearly **17 million kids** in low-income families who would receive less to buy food under the RSC plan to cut **SNAP benefits** for all participants.

Take away benefits from people who are older, disabled, or both:

- from **7.5 million seniors and disabled people** who risk losing cash assistance under the RSC plan to convert 50-year-old **Supplemental Security Income** to a block grant.

Dramatically disinvest in the nation's communities, economy, environment:

- RSC and HBC would **cut *by half* — to lows not seen for a century — an entire budget category** that invests in areas like public health and medical research, safety from environmental disasters, and the nation's transportation infrastructure.

These cuts would inflict **outsized harm on people of color,** who due to systemic racism in the U.S.' economic, educational, and health systems are likelier to need help affording the basics.

Source: CBPP Staff, "House Republican Agendas and Project 2025 Would Increase Poverty and Hardship, Drive Up the Uninsured Rate, and Disinvest From People, Communities, and the Economy"

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It is also notable what is missing from these agendas. Despite rhetoric from some Republicans about the need to support families — and children in particular — these sweeping agendas do not call for new or increased investments to help families afford child care or rent, to expand the Child Tax Credit, or to bolster the EITC for workers without children. And they do nothing to ensure that all workers have access to paid family and medical leave so they can take time off to welcome a new child, attend to a health issue, or care for a family member who needs them.

These agendas, particularly Project 2025, cover multiple areas and this report does not analyze them in full. It provides key examples of fiscal, economic, and health policies within the agendas and, critically, how the plans have broad similarities. Key areas, such as the agendas' impact on the functioning of the Justice Department, on abortion rights and reproductive freedom, on civil rights protections, and on the potential politicization of federal agencies and the civil service, are critically important but outside the scope of this analysis.