
Greenstein: President Trump's 2021 Budget Would Widen Country's Divisions

CBPP today released a statement from Robert Greenstein, president, on President Trump's new budget:

In the face of a bitterly divided country that needs healing, President Trump today threw gasoline on the fire by releasing a stunningly harsh budget that would tear us further apart.

It would push tens of millions of less fortunate Americans into or deeper into poverty and cause widespread hardship even as it doubles down on tax cuts for the most well-off. It would take health coverage away from millions of people and cut aid to millions of families and individuals struggling to make ends meet. At the same time, the budget would make permanent the 2017 tax law's tax cuts for individuals, which are heavily weighted toward the top. As a result, the budget would further widen inequality and racial disparities.

The budget proposes \$1 trillion in cuts to Medicaid and Affordable Care Act premium tax credits over ten years, causing millions of people to lose coverage. It calls for cuts of more than \$180 billion over ten years in basic food assistance for hard-pressed families by slashing SNAP (formerly known as food stamps). It also shrinks assistance for people with disabilities; eliminates a raft of low-income housing programs; steeply cuts a range of programs that support long-term economic growth, like investments in college affordability; and even calls for large cuts in the National Institutes of Health.

The budget walks away from last year's bipartisan agreement for funding non-defense appropriated programs, which took months to hammer out. It calls for cutting 2021 funding for these programs \$46 billion below the 2020 level and \$51 billion below the level established for 2021 in the bipartisan agreement. These cuts would come from the part of the budget that funds priorities like education, environmental protection, housing assistance, national parks, and scientific research. Furthermore, the cuts in these programs would spiral after 2021, reaching a stunning 38 percent (in inflation-adjusted dollars) by the tenth year. Indeed, by the tenth year, expenditures for non-defense discretionary programs, measured as a share of the economy (GDP), *would reach their lowest level since Calvin Coolidge was President in the 1920s.*

A few examples of these cuts: legal services for the poor — gone; low-income energy assistance — gone; funding to make capital repairs in public housing — gone. These are but a small fraction of the draconian cuts in non-defense appropriated programs the budget calls for.

Infrastructure is another broken promise. Despite trying to create an impression of major action on this front, the budget's infrastructure investment is very modest relative to the need. And part of the modest new investment would be cancelled out by cuts in other infrastructure programs.

The President's budget shows us his priorities for this year and, if he's re-elected, years after that.

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