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Budget Conference Guts Nondefense Investments

Today, the House passed a budget agreement that ignores calls from [2,100 organizations](#) to replace harmful sequestration cuts now with a balanced approach to deficit reduction that recognizes the equal importance of defense and nondefense programs in our national and economic security. The agreement fails to stop sequestration cuts in Fiscal Years (FY) 2016 and doubles the cuts in nondefense discretionary (NDD) programs—education, research, public health, veterans’ health care, law enforcement, and job training—over the coming decade. All this, while increasing defense spending well-above the sequestered caps in FY 2016 through budgetary gimmicks, and robbing NDD to pay for defense increases in out years.

Starting in FY 2016, sequestration will cut NDD programs by an average of \$37 billion a year, *in addition to* the cuts that the Budget Control Act’s spending caps already impose. This new budget agreement adds *another* \$496 billion in NDD cuts over the coming decade—an average of *another* \$50 billion a year. By FY 2025, NDD spending would be cut 14 percent below the sequester level.

Draconian cuts like these would do irreparable damage to NDD programs that keep Americans healthy and secure. As evidenced in NDD United’s 2013 report [Faces of Austerity: How Budget Cuts Make Us Sicker Poorer and Less Secure](#) and subsequent sector-specific reports, these cuts are already dragging down our economic recovery, denying children educational opportunities, leaving low-income seniors without food, hindering scientific discovery, delaying justice, compromising public health and safety, eroding our infrastructure, and threatening our ability to address emergencies around the world.

Despite these well-documented impacts, the conferenced budget agreement doubles down on lop-sided, NDD cuts. Numerous bipartisan budget experts agree that Congress cannot get America’s fiscal house in order without a balanced approach to deficit reduction. Nevertheless, deficit reduction efforts since FY 2010 have disproportionately relied on spending cuts and on NDD cuts, in particular. In FY 2016, the sequestered spending cap for NDD is already 17 percent below FY 2010 levels. As a share of our nation’s economy or GDP, these programs are on track to their lowest level on record in 1962.

Rather than continuing to focus on deficit reduction efforts that gut vital programs, Congress must do something now to address the harmful sequestration cuts that return in full force in FY 2016 both for defense and nondefense. In doing so, lawmakers must provide equal relief to defense and NDD programs, as strong investments in both NDD and defense are necessary to keep our country competitive, safe, and secure.

NDD United is an alliance of more than 2,100 national, state, and local organizations working to protect investments in core government functions that benefit all Americans.

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