



WORKING TO
STRENGTHEN AMERICA



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#RaiseTheCaps Day - September 6, 2017

Media Toolkit

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#RaiseTheCaps Day Press Conference

Wednesday, September 6, 2017

2:30 PM – 3:00 PM

House Triangle, Capitol Building

Featuring House Minority Whip Steny Hoyer

RSVP to Deaton@DC-CRD.com

We are asking Congress to ensure adequate funding for programs funded through annual appropriations, by continuing the bipartisan practice of providing relief from sequestration budget cuts and opposing any new efforts to cut these programs more deeply. These "nondefense discretionary" (NDD) programs serve many vital national needs but have been subject to repeated cuts over the past six years, including through the appropriations caps and sequestration process established by the 2011 Budget Control Act. Full sequestration returns in fiscal year (FY) 2018, when the two-year relief provided by the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015 expires. Congress should avoid making further reductions in these programs and work to replace the scheduled sequestration cuts through a package that is balanced—both in how such relief is paid for and how it is applied to defense and NDD programs.



Social Media

Social media is becoming increasingly crucial to generating engagement and visibility for your issue and organization. In addition to being the glimpse into your work for the public and your coalition partners, it can be a low-cost, low-effort way for you to advocate, drive support, and be part of a viral echo chamber on the need to reinstate and raise federal funding for public health initiatives.

General Tips for Using Social Media to Advocate

1. **Create Your Echo Chamber.** Prior to launching your advocacy campaign or report, make sure you have “liked” on Facebook and “followed” on Twitter all those people and organizations with whom you have key relationships including coalition partners, allies, affiliates, members, federal agency partners, experts, journalists, etc.
2. **Rough Plan.** Sketch a rough plan of when and what you’ll be posting throughout the week. Twitter makes this easy with [Tweetdeck](#). Keep the plan flexible so you can react to and hook the posts to any relevant news of the day or week.
3. **Stay Concise.** Draft your posts ahead of time, again, with room to tweak on the spot. Twitter requires posts to be 140 characters or less but it’s best practice to keep them to 100-120 characters so others can re-tweet you and add their own 2 cents. With Twitter – forget proper grammar or style while Facebook posts can be a little bit longer and formal but the shorter the better.
4. **Hashtag and Tag It!** Using hashtags is simply a way to categorize your posts and allow users to follow and join the discussion. Use the campaign hashtag in all Tweets and Facebook posts (hashtags are new to Facebook but slowly catching on) about the campaign. Put a hashtag in front of other key words you may use – with no spaces to relay the message to those searching the larger issues. Engage someone or an organization in the conversation by typing the @ symbol followed by their handle or name.
5. **Engage Your Followers.** Make sure at least one of your posts during the campaign calls on followers to take action on your issue whether it be to share a story, sign an online petition, send a letter to Congress through your digital mail program, or sign up for your weekly newsletter. This also allows you to collect information from supporters.

6. **Use Visuals.** Statistics show that using infographics and memes tend to increase followers' engagement with posts (likes, shares, comments, re-tweets, etc.) and effective ones help get an important and complex point across, minus all the jargon. Have them professionally designed or easily create one using a stock photo, graph, or visual from a report with text added.
7. **Collect the Stats.** Document your campaign's success and learn for the next one by collecting your engagement statistics. Try to sum your new followers on each platform; how many times you were "re-tweeted" or "shared" and calculate a cross-section of the types of activity your campaign generated.
8. **Don't stop!** Keep your Facebook and Twitter pages updated to show you are a go-to source for information on your issue and keep your captive audience captive. Outside of your issue campaigns and big events, share facts (new and old) about your issue; re-tweet your partner organizations' new work; link your followers to helpful resources; and provide fact-checks to any opponents' new work.

Sample Twitter Posts

Tell your Member of Congress to vote to end #Sequestration today. Hard working Americans can't afford to be political pawns. #RaisetheCaps

@(MOC), cutting critical services is NOT the answer to cutting our deficit. #Raisethecaps before it hurts innocent Americans.

@(MOC), it's time we solve the budget crisis, and put an end to #sequestration. Vote to raise the spending caps! #RaisetheCaps

#Education, #Health, and #Jobs are some of many things that get cut if you don't raise the spending caps, @(MOC). #RaisetheCaps

@(MOC), don't put your own interests ahead of America's children. Raise the spending caps so we can better fund our #PreK programs.

#Sequestration hurts America's senior citizens. Tell #Congress to raise the spending caps and support our seniors. #RaisetheCaps

Retweet if you agree that #Congress should stop playing politics, end #sequestration and #raisethecaps

@(MOC), You're hurting America's working families if you don't end #sequestration and #RaisetheCaps

@(Ryan/McConnell/Schumer/Pelosi), put partisanship aside and do what's right for the American people before deep cuts occur on Oct 1.

#FACT: 4 million women could be denied access to healthcare if we don't #raisethecaps and Title X is eliminated.

#FACT: Govt spending in public health, vets care and early ed is at its lowest since Eisenhower Admin. #raisethecaps

Cuts in funding will be devastating for Americans from all walks of life. It's time #Congress gets to work to #RaisetheCaps #CutsHurt

Sample Facebook Posts

It's time for Congress to put an end to sequestration and raise the spending caps before more Americans feel the hurt. Share if you agree. <http://www.nddunited.org/about-ndd/>

For far too long, our elected leaders have been playing political games with non-defense discretionary funds. See how you may be affected here: <http://www.nddunited.org/about-ndd/>

Congress is scheduled to see deep cuts on October 1st if they don't vote to end sequestration. Contact your members of Congress to urge them to raise the spending caps on Nondefense Discretionary funds today! <http://www.nddunited.org/about-ndd/>

Press Releases

As the media landscape changes, both press releases and media advisories are becoming less frequently used. However, both can still be handy to put in the body of a pitch email as background (reporters are unlikely to open attachments), and both make easily-distributable reports of your events.

Tips (Step-by-Step) for Writing a Press Release or Media Advisory

1. **Logo.** Put your logo or name at the top, along with those of any coalition member logos.
2. **Contact Info.** Put a name and number where you can be reached. If there is an event, include a cell phone number for the person who will be at the event.
3. **Headline.** It helps to think of this first. Create a catchy headline that gets your main idea across. Make sure it communicates the news of the event.
4. **Riders.** Write a secondary headline, called a sub-head or a rider, that adds another detail about the story but is separate from the story itself.
5. **Lede.** Write the lede – the first sentence or two, intended to entice the reader. Begin the release with the city and state where the event took place (or if there's no event, where your group is based), and date. These should be italicized.
6. **Jump In.** Grab the reader's attention quickly by putting the who/ what/when/where/ why and all other important information in the first couple of sentences. Doing this ensures that the audience will read on. Note that in an advisory, this information should be highlighted in bullet or table form as well.
7. **Conclusion.** The remaining paragraphs (3-4 for a press release, 1-2 for an advisory, plus bullets) should have facts, background information and, ideally, quotes from event participants or spokespeople. Keep the content to no more than one page for an advisory and two for a release.
8. **Signal the end.** Put “###” at the end of the release, centered.



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2,000 ORGANIZATIONS CALL ON CONGRESS TO STOP SEQUESTRATION, RAISE SPENDING CAPS TO REINVEST IN AMERICA

With the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015 Expiring in Fiscal 2018, Funding for Infrastructure, Education, Public Health and Safety, Job Training, Science and More Are at Risk

Washington, DC—Just weeks before budget cuts postponed by the 2015 bipartisan budget deal are scheduled to go back into effect, 2,000 national, state and local organizations are once again calling on Congress to stop sequestration and raise the spending caps. NDD United, which represents organizations spanning interests as varied as education, public health, infrastructure, and law enforcement, released a letter demanding Congress raise the spending caps and end sequestration through a bipartisan budget deal. Such a deal is the only way to prevent cuts to nondefense discretionary (NDD) programs that benefit all Americans.

“We’re running out of time to prevent another fiscal crisis, and once again, real Americans will pay the price for Congress’ inaction,” said Ben Corb, Co-Chair of NDD United. “Congress must pass a bipartisan budget deal to restore critical funding equally to both defense and nondefense spending that keeps Americans healthy, safe, and secure. That’s why 2,000 organizations have come together to say, ‘Raise the Caps.’ Enough is enough. We see the approaching disaster, and we’re not doing nearly enough to stop it.”

More than 2,000 organizations represented by NDD United signed a letter (www.nddunited.org/action) to Congress calling on lawmakers work together to avoid further cuts. The letter reads in part:

Americans are feeling the negative effects of the Budget Control Act’s austere spending caps and sequestration. These cuts are dragging down our economic recovery, hampering business growth and development, weakening public health preparedness and response, reducing resources for our nation’s schools and colleges, compromising federal oversight and fraud recovery, hindering scientific discovery, eroding our infrastructure, and threatening our ability to address emergencies around the world. Simply put, these cuts are bad for the country and are not sustainable.

Despite the vast array of important, effective services provided through these programs—infrastructure and housing, veterans services, education and job training, National Parks, medical and scientific research, and public health, safety and security, to give just some examples—overall NDD appropriations have been cut dramatically and disproportionately in recent years as lawmakers work to

reduce the deficit, even though experts across the political spectrum agree these programs aren't a driving factor behind our nation's mid- and long-term fiscal challenges.

Recognizing the value of these core government functions, in 2013 and 2015 Congress approved bipartisan budget deals that provided temporary and partial relief from sequestration. With House appropriations bills now being written to the sequestered spending caps, we see the difficult tradeoffs necessitated by woefully inadequate and historically low levels of spending after years of deficit reduction. As a result of sequestration and other austerity measures enacted beginning in 2011, the cap on NDD funding in fiscal 2017 is 13.4 percent below 2010 levels, adjusted for inflation. Without action to stop sequestration, in fiscal 2018 NDD programs are projected to decline to 3.1 percent of GDP—equal to the lowest level in more than 50 years.

#

NDD United is a coalition of national, state, and local organizations joining forces in an effort to save nondefense discretionary (NDD) programs from more devastating cuts. NDD programs are core functions government provides for the benefit of all, including medical research, public health, and education, among others. Every day these programs support economic growth and strengthen the safety and security of every American in every state and community across the nation.

Op-eds

Op-eds are an opportunity to comment on local trends or news events, such as an upcoming vote on a piece of legislation. You can also use Op-eds to comment on opinions or happenings in the area or nationally. Op-eds are fairly formal, but should be gripping. They can call the reader to action or present audiences with a reason to support your opinion on an issue. Op-eds are difficult to place in larger papers, but in more local readerships, you may be able to place them fairly easily. To place an Op-ed, email the opinion editor with your piece. Typically, Op-eds are 500-600 words.

Sample Op-ed

Stop America's Economic Pain: Tell Congress to End Sequestration

By Emily Holubowich, Co-Chair, NDD United

More than 60,000 children without preschool. Veterans without critical healthcare. Four million women without access to prenatal and family planning services. More than a thousand fewer police on the streets. These are just a handful of the devastating consequences if Congress doesn't come to a budget agreement before sequestration returns in 2018.

How did we get here...again? Let's back up.

In 2011, Congress passed a law that cut federal spending by nearly \$1 trillion dollars and said that if lawmakers couldn't agree on a "grand bargain" to reduce our deficit by a total of \$4 trillion, another \$1 trillion in automatic, arbitrary and across the board budget cuts would take effect in 2013. Up first on the chopping block? Nondefense discretionary programs—those programs ranging from education and job training, to housing and science, to natural resources and veterans services, to public health, safety and security. Essentially, everything that's not defense-related. Despite the fact that experts across the political spectrum agree these programs aren't a driving factor behind our nation's mid- and long-term fiscal challenges, they've been cut dramatically and disproportionately in recent years.

In fact, current non-defense discretionary funding is the lowest level on record dating back to the Eisenhower administration, relative to the size of the economy.

And not shockingly, Congress couldn't agree—and still, apparently, can't. Though the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015 provided two years of partial sequestration relief, that deal expires in fiscal year 2018. In appropriations bills now being written to the

sequestered spending caps, we are seeing the difficult tradeoffs necessitated by woefully inadequate and historically low levels of spending after years of deficit reduction.

That's why more than 2,000 national, state and local organizations are calling on Congress to avoid the impending fiscal crisis and end sequestration. These organizations have come together to say, "Raise the Caps." Enough is enough. We see the speeding train coming down the track and we're not doing nearly enough to stop it.

Why should we Raise the Caps? Federal funding supports government programs that promote job creation, grow the economy and provide services to our most vulnerable citizens. Due to the austere budget caps, elementary and secondary education, housing, and workforce training programs are unable to meet needs. Scientific discovery has been hindered and public health preparedness and response has been weakened. Maintenance of air traffic control, weather systems, and National Parks has been deferred. Federal justice programs haven't adequately supported states and localities in meeting needs of law enforcement and crime victims. Programs designed to aid foreign victims of war and hunger are falling short, compromising our ability to address emergencies around the world.

There is bipartisan agreement that sequestration is bad policy and ultimately hurts our nation. It's time to end the era of austerity.

Emily Holubowich is executive director of the Coalition for Health Funding and a co-chair of NDD United, a coalition of more than 3,200 organizations standing together to demand a balanced approach to deficit reduction.

A Word about Letters to the Editor

Letters to the Editor are useful because they allow NDD United or your organization to respond to a news story or offer commentary on an event even if you cannot get a story pitched or Op-ed placed. In larger outlets, it can be quite difficult to place an Op-ed, so an LTE is a good option there. LTEs are usually a bit formal. They include a clear reference to the article they are in response to, and they are short – about 150-200 words.

Sample Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

After reading your most recent article highlighting sequestration and the cuts that could go into effect this year should no budget deal occur (ARTICLE TITLE, DATE), I felt it was incumbent upon me to write.

Nondefense discretionary funds (NDD) have seen a massive dip in funding, with levels currently at their lowest since the Eisenhower administration, relative to the size of the economy. Come the new funding cycle, these programs-- which fund public health, job training, education and other critical services-- will sustain a tragic slashing should no compromise is reached by our leaders in Washington, DC. It seems we are all marching on a crash course to disaster.

A bipartisan deal would prevent drastic cuts to women's health, early education, transportation safety, law enforcement, veterans, and other important sectors.

It's time for Congress to end the political games, and stand up for what's right for Americans from all walks of life by ending sequestration and raising the spending cap.

Sincerely,

[Name, Title, Organization, City, State]