

Congress Needs to Pass a Budget That Supports Working Americans, NOT Big Business Interests

INSTEAD OF PASSING A BUDGET TO SUPPORT WORKING FAMILIES, Republicans in Congress are pushing a FY 2016 budget that maintains harsh budget caps, slashes funding for vital programs, and blocks and weakens worker and public protections through ideological riders. Republicans are trying to use the budget process to achieve what they haven't been able to do through the normal legislative process to gut the protections and programs they oppose.

These riders, supported by Big Business groups and banks, undermine the right of workers to join a union and have a voice on the job, worker safety, and the ability of workers to earn fair wages and save for retirement. Congress needs to pass a budget with no ideological riders that will help our economy grow, raise wages and work for all people, not just for the wealthy and corporations.

Here are some of the key ways the Republican budget bills would hurt working Americans:

SLASH FUNDING FOR WORKER PROTECTION PROGRAMS.

- The Republican budget slashes funding for the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) by up to 28%, crippling the agency and preventing it from doing its job to conduct elections for workers who want to form a union and protect workers from unfair labor practices and employer retaliation.
- The job safety budgets for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) are cut by more than \$80 million compared with the president's request. This will mean fewer inspections of dangerous workplaces and mines and less training for workers about job hazards. Workplace deaths in the United States are increasing, with nearly 4,700 deaths reported in 2014. Currently, federal OSHA can only inspect workplaces on average once every 140 years. Fewer inspections will mean more worker deaths and injuries.
- Funding for the Wage and Hour Division that enforces wage protections is cut by more than \$60 million, costing workers \$70 million to \$80 million in back wages that will not be recovered.

CUT FUNDING FOR EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAMS THAT PREPARE WORKERS FOR JOBS IN THE CHANGING ECONOMY. The bills reduce funding for job training and employment services by \$500 million to \$650 million, depriving at least 2 million workers of these important services.

REDUCE FUNDING FOR GOVERNMENT FINANCIAL REGULATORY AGENCIES, THREATENING FINANCIAL SECURITY FOR WORKING PEOPLE AND THE COUNTRY. The Republican budget undermines the Dodd-Frank reforms passed after the 2008 financial crisis. It cuts funding for the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and the Commodities Futures Trading Commission (CFTC), hindering market oversight and enforcement. The bill would weaken the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) by limiting its independence and politicizing its funding and leadership, hurting the agency's efforts to protect consumers from financial fraud and abuse.

REDUCE FUNDING FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION BY \$5.3 BILLION TO \$6.4 BILLION. This would undermine the nation's efforts to provide our children with the kind of education needed to prepare them for the future. The Republican budget bills would eliminate as many as 19 education programs, including programs that support educational improvements for our most vulnerable students.

BLOCK OR OVERTURN KEY RULES THAT PROTECT WORKING AMERICANS' RIGHTS, SAFETY, HEALTH AND FINANCIAL SECURITY THROUGH SCORES OF IDEOLOGICAL RIDERS.

The Republican budget bills include scores of ideological riders, pushed by Big Business groups, to block needed protections for working Americans and the public. Among the most harmful riders for workers are measures that would:

- Roll back workers' rights to join unions and protections from unfair labor practices by employers. The bills include a stack of anti-worker riders that would block the new NLRB rule that streamlines union elections measures and bar other efforts to modernize elections, deny workers on tribal lands the right to organize, prevent the NLRB from updating its rules to determine whether two or more employers are joint employers and make it more difficult for workers in smaller bargaining units to organize. The bills also roll back federal employees' right to union representation by eliminating official time or payroll deduction of union dues.
- Bar OSHA from issuing a final silica standard, years in the making, to protect workers from this deadly dust until additional scientific studies are conducted, further delaying the rule and leading to more diseases and deaths. The new rule, when issued, will prevent 700 deaths and 1,600 new cases of silicosis each year. The bills also would strip workers of their legal right to have a representative participate in OSHA workplace inspections.
- Deprive minimum wage and overtime protections to low-wage seasonal workers hired under federal contracts.
- Prohibit the Department of Labor (DOL) from implementing the executive order on fair pay and safe workplaces to crack down on federal contractors that violate labor laws.
- Block DOL from issuing its fiduciary rule to help ensure working people saving for retirement are receiving investment advice that aligns with their best interests.
- Drive wages down for both U.S. and migrant workers by requiring DOL to use private employer wage surveys, and deny jobs to U.S. workers by expanding the H-2B program to nonseasonal programs.
- Gut the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform Act, which has strengthened laws and programs to protect consumers and reduced the risk of another financial catastrophe. The bills include a mega rider that impedes oversight of the financial system, erodes safeguards in mortgage markets and lets large financial firms off the hook for risky unsound practices.
- Overturn the Department of Education's new gainful employment regulation that requires career education programs receiving federal funds to prepare students for gainful employment in recognized occupations. This rule will help ensure students get jobs that pay decent wages, and are not left with worthless degrees and saddled with student debt they can't repay.
- Eliminate all funding for the implementation of the Affordable Care Act.

The AFL-CIO strongly opposes these budget cuts and ideological riders and is joining with our allies to call upon Congress to pass a clean budget with no ideological riders, no budget caps and the needed funding for vital programs.

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