

NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS OPPOSING THE BALANCED BUDGET AMENDMENT

November 16, 2011

Dear Representative/Senator:

The 277 undersigned national organizations strongly urge you to oppose any balanced budget amendment to the United States Constitution.

A balanced budget constitutional amendment would damage the economy, not strengthen it. Demanding that policymakers cut spending and/or raise taxes, even when the economy slows, is the opposite of what is needed to stabilize a weak economy and avert recessions. Such steps would risk tipping a faltering economy into recession or worsening an ongoing downturn, costing large numbers of jobs while blocking worthy investments to stimulate jobs and growth and address the nation's urgent needs in infrastructure and other areas.

According to a new analysis of a balanced budget amendment by Macroeconomic Advisers, one of the nation's preeminent private economic forecasting firms, if a constitutional balanced budget amendment had already been ratified and were now being enforced for fiscal year 2012, "the effect on the economy would be catastrophic." The analysis reports that if the 2012 budget were balanced through spending cuts, those cuts would have to total about \$1.5 trillion in 2012 alone, which they estimate would throw about 15 million more people out of work, double the unemployment rate from 9 percent to approximately 18 percent, and cause the economy to shrink by about 17 percent instead of growing by an expected 2 percent.

Additionally, all versions of the balanced budget amendment being considered also contain a provision requiring three-fifths of the whole membership of both houses to raise the debt limit, making risk of default more likely and empowering a willful minority to hold the full faith and credit of the U.S. hostage to whatever other political demands they may have. The difficulty of raising the debt limit this summer illustrates how hard it can be to secure the necessary votes even when the consequences are so grave. Only three of the last 11 debt limit increases obtained three-fifths vote in both chambers; two of those instances occurred amidst the financial crisis in 2008 when the debt limit increases were included in larger legislation to respond to the meltdowns already occurring in the housing and financial markets, and the third occurred this August as part of the Budget Control Act and came only after a bitter process that led the nation to the brink of default.

In short, a balanced budget amendment is a recipe for making recessions more frequent, longer, and deeper, while requiring severe cuts that would harshly affect seniors, children, veterans, people with disabilities, homeland security activities, public health and safety, environmental protection, education and medical research. It would almost certainly necessitate massive cuts to vital programs including Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, veterans' benefits and lead to even deeper cuts than the House-passed budget.

A balanced budget amendment has no place in the Constitution of the United States. Our Constitution has served the nation well because it represents enduring principles that are the foundations of our government. It should not be used as a substitute for real leadership on fiscal policy.

We strongly urge you to oppose any constitutional balanced budget amendment.

Sincerely,

9to5, National Association of Working Women
AFL-CIO
AIDS Alliance for Children, Youth & Families
AIDS Community Research Initiative of America
The AIDS Institute
AIDS Project Los Angeles
AIDS United
Alliance for a Just Society
Alliance for Excellent Education
Alliance for Justice
Alliance for Retired Americans
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
American Association of Community Colleges
American Association of School Administrators (AASA)
American Association of University Professors
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American Counseling Association
American Dance Therapy Association
American Educational Research Association
American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO
American Federation of School Administrators, AFL-CIO
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)
American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO
American Jewish Committee
American Medical Rehabilitation Providers Association (AMRPA)
American Medical Student Association (AMSA)
American Network of Community Options and Resources
American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO
American Psychiatric Association
American Public Health Association
American Rights at Work
American School Counselor Association
Americans for Democratic Action
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)
The Arc of the United States
Asian American Justice Center, member of Asian American Center for Advancing Justice
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum
Association for Career and Technical Education
Association of Adult Literacy Professional Developers
Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs (ATAP)
Association of Education Service Agencies (AESAs)
Association of Flight Attendants - CWA
Association of School Business Officials
Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD)
Autism National Committee
AVAC: Global Advocacy for HIV Prevention

Bazon Center for Mental Health Law
Bienestar Human Services
Bread for the World
Break the Cycle
Building and Construction Trades Department, AFL-CIO
B'nai B'rith International
Campaign for America's Future
Campaign for Community Change
CANN - Community Access National Network
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
The Center for Media and Democracy
Center for Medicare Advocacy
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
Child Welfare League of America (CWLA)
Children's Defense Fund
Children's Dental Health Project
Cities for Progress, Institute for Policy Studies
Citizens for Global Solutions
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington
Citizens for Tax Justice
Clinical Social Work Association
Coalition for Health Funding
Coalition of Labor Union Women
Coalition on Human Needs
Commission on Adult Basic Education
Committee for Education Funding
Common Cause
Communications Workers of America (CWA)
Community Action Partnership
Community Food Security Coalition
Community Organizations in Action
Corporation for Enterprise Development (CFED)
Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders
Council for Exceptional Children
Council for Opportunity in Education
Council of Administrators of Special Education
Council of the Great City Schools
CREDO Action
Defenders of Wildlife
Democracy 21
Demos
Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO
Direct Care Alliance
Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund
Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children (DEC)
Easter Seals
Elev8 (Baltimore, Chicago, New Mexico, and Oakland)
Every Child Matters Education Fund
FairTest, the National Center for Fair & Open Testing, Inc.

Families USA
Farmworker Justice
Feminist Majority
First Focus Campaign for Children
Food & Water Watch
Food Research & Action Center (FRAC)
Forum for Youth Investment
Foster Family-based Treatment Association
Franciscan Action Network (FAN)
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Friends of the Earth
Gamaliel
Generations United
GLSEN
Gray Panthers
Growth & Justice
Half in Ten
Health & Disability Advocates
Health Care for America Now
Health GAP (Global Access Project)
HealthHIV
HIV Law Project
Horizons for Homeless Children
Housing Works
Interfaith Worker Justice
International Association of Fire Fighters
International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers
International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, Iron Ship Builders, Blacksmiths, Forgers, and Helpers,
AFLCIO
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers
International Brotherhood of Teamsters
International Society for Technology in Education
International Union of Police Associations, AFL-CIO
International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace & Agricultural Implement Workers of America
(UAW)
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Laborers' International Union of North America, (LiUNA!)
Latino Commission on AIDS
The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
Leadership Team, Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia
League of Conservation Voters
League of Rural Voters
League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
League of Women Voters of the United States
Learning Disabilities Association of America
Main Street Alliance
Medicare Rights Center
Mental Health America

NAACP

National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys

National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association (NARFE)

National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity

National Alliance of State & Territorial AIDS Directors (NASTAD)

National Assembly on School-Based Health Care

National Association for Adults with Special Learning Needs

National Association for Children's Behavioral Health

National Association for College Admission Counseling

National Association for Hispanic Elderly

National Association for Music Education

National Association for the Education of Young Children

National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a)

National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities

National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors (NACBHDD)

National Association of Elementary School Principals

National Association of Federally Impacted Schools

National Association of Government Employees/SEIU

National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO)

National Association of Letter Carriers

National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs (NANASP)

National Association of People with AIDS (NAPWA)

National Association of Private Special Education Centers

National Association of School Psychologists

National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP)

National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium

National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE)

National Association of State Head Injury Administrators

National Association of Thrift Savings Plan Participants

National Black Child Development Institute

National Center for Family Literacy

National Center for Law and Economic Justice

National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence

National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development

National Coalition for LGBT Health

National Coalition for Literacy

National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare

National Congress of American Indians

The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care

National Council for Community and Education Partnerships (NCCEP)

National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare

National Council for the Social Studies

National Council of Jewish Women

National Council of La Raza (NCLR)

National Council of Women's Organizations (NCWO)

National Council on Independent Living

National Disability Rights Network

National Education Association (NEA)

National Employment Law Project (NELP)
National Fair Housing Alliance
National Family Caregivers Association
National Federation of Federal Employees
National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Action Fund
National Health Care for the Homeless Council
National Hispanic Council on Aging (NHCOA)
National Housing Trust
National Immigration Law Center
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty
National Low Income Housing Coalition
National Organization for Women (NOW)
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Pediatric AIDS Network
National People's Action
National Priorities Project
National Respite Coalition
National Rural Education Advocacy Coalition
National Rural Education Association (NREA)
National School Boards Association
National Skills Coalition
National Superintendents Roundtable
National Treasury Employees Union
National Urban League
National WIC Association
National Women's Conference Committee
National Women's Law Center
Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
Not Dead Yet
OMB Watch
Paralyzed Veterans of America
People For the American Way (PFAW)
Population Action International
Progressive States Action
Project Inform
Public Citizen
Public Education Network
Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities Coalition (REHDC)
Rebuild The Dream
RESULTS
Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
School Social Work Association of America
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S. (SIECUS)
Share Our Strength
Sisters of Mercy Institute Justice Team
Social Security Disability Coalition

Social Security Works
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center
Stand Up for Rural America, Robert S. Warwick, Steering Committee
Stewards of Affordable Housing for the Future (SAHF)
Strengthen Social Security Campaign
Sugar Law Center for Economic and Social Justice
TESOL International Association
Transportation Communications Union
Transportation Equity Network
Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO
Treatment Access Expansion Project
Treatment Action Group (TAG)
Trust for America's Health (TFAH)
Union for Reform Judaism
United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipe Fitting Industry of the United States and Canada
United Cerebral Palsy
United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries
United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE)
United for a Fair Economy
The United Methodist Church – General Board of Church and Society
United Methodist Women
United Mine Workers
United Spinal Association
United States Student Association (USSA)
United Steelworkers (USW)
USAction
US Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association (USPRA)
VillageCare
Voices for America's Children
Voices for Progress
Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW)
Women's Institute for a Secure Retirement (WISER)
The Woodhull Sexual Freedom Alliance
Working America
YouthBuild USA
YWCA USA
ZERO TO THREE