

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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State Legislators and Dozens of CT Organizations Call on Congressional Delegation to Oppose Federal Cuts

U.S. House and Senate Debate Federal Budget Resolutions This Week; House and Senate's Proposed Cuts Exceed President's Cuts

(Hartford CT) As the U.S. House and Senate meet this week to debate and vote on federal budget resolutions, a coalition of dozens of Connecticut organizations, along with state elected officials, called on the state's Congressional delegation to oppose the deep federal budget cuts under consideration. A news conference was held at the Legislative Office Building by a coalition of more than 60 Connecticut organizations representing a broad range of groups concerned about the impact of the federal budget on Connecticut's children, families, seniors, businesses, health care, housing, schools, colleges, environment, veterans, women, and other groups and services. (See attached letter to Congressional delegation for a list of organizations.)

The coalition called on the Connecticut Congressional delegation to

- Oppose the huge cuts in federal funding proposed by the House and Senate Budget Committees, and the President. The Medicaid cuts proposed by the House and Senate Committees *exceed* the severe cuts already proposed by President Bush.
- Support a balanced approach to deficit reduction that includes reversing tax cuts for the wealthiest American, rather than only cutting spending. Current federal budget proposals cut spending and *also* cut taxes, enlarging the deficit.

The proposed Budget Resolutions of the House and Senate Budget Committees both call for Medicaid cuts that are *twice* those proposed by the President. They also propose a 13%-14% cut

in federal funding (by 2010) for domestic, non-entitlement programs, including education and job training, community development, health care for veterans, medical research, child care, housing, transportation and environmental protection. For example, federal funding for education and training would be cut by 13% to 14%, and federal funding for natural resources and environmental programs by 21% to 22%, under these Resolutions.

Under the House and Senate proposals, Connecticut would face devastating cuts to important programs.¹ If these cuts go through, the estimated impact on Connecticut over the five-year period of 2006-2010 could include:

- Earned Income Tax Credit cuts of \$28.4 million meant that 18,159 Connecticut families **working hard to make ends meet won't benefit from an EITC**;
- Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) cuts of \$38.4 million mean that 3,704 4-person families, **or** 4,359 3-person families in Connecticut **won't receive TANF/TFA benefits**;
- SSI cuts of \$33.6 million mean that **79,122 total recipients**; or **66,892 blind or disabled children**; or **105,708 senior citizens** in the state (44% of whom are blind or disabled) won't receive their SSI benefits.

The news conference occurred two days after the Connecticut General Assembly's Government Administration and Elections Committee passed a resolution urging the U.S. Congress to oppose budget cuts in domestic programs. The resolution, SJ 41, A Resolution Memorializing Congress to Oppose Budget Cuts in Vital Domestic Programs, was approved by the Committee on Monday, March 14.

"Connecticut is facing crippling cuts from the Bush administration in areas such as health care and transportation among others. As far as the federal budget is concerned, what's brewing in Washington is a recipe for disaster here in Connecticut. We must do all we can to fight the devastating cuts being considered in Washington as we speak," said **Senate President Pro Tempore Don Williams**.

"This federal budget breaks faith with thousands of veterans in our state and across the country," said **Senator Gayle Slossberg, Chair of the Veterans Affairs Committee**. It is unconscionable and unprecedented that in a time of war our federal government would turn its back on these brave men and women who serve."

"Our Congressional delegation – from both sides of the aisle – needs to stand up for Connecticut and press for a *balanced* approach to federal deficit reduction. Cutting spending alone is not fair, good for the economy, or good for Connecticut. A *balanced* approach also would call for rescinding some of the tax cuts that have benefited the wealthiest families, while reducing the sever cuts proposed that would *truly* threaten our nation's well-being," said **Shelley Geballe, President of Connecticut Voices for Children**.

¹ For greater detail on the proposed budgets, see S. Geballe, *Making Matters Worse: The House and Senate Budget Committees' Proposals Enlarge the Federal Deficit and also Require Deep Cuts in Programs Essential to Children and Families*.

"These cuts simply pass the buck to state and local governments and would hurt our most at-risk populations," said **James J. Finley, Jr., Associate Director of the CT Conference of Municipalities**. "This budget hits Connecticut particularly hard. We challenge Connecticut's congressional delegation to oppose these harmful cuts and pass a federal budget that works for, not against, the people of our state."

"AARP is supporting the Smith-Bingaman Amendment in the Senate that would replace cuts to Medicaid with a Medicaid Commission," said **Brenda Kelley, State Director of AARP Connecticut**. "AARP agrees that Medicaid should be made more efficient. However, reforms driven by arbitrary budget goals will merely lead to cost shifts and make the situation worse."

"Connecticut's 30 not-for-profit acute care hospitals are extremely concerned about the possibility of federal cuts to Medicare and Medicaid funding, which would have a devastating impact on hospitals' ability to serve as the state's healthcare safety net," said **Jennifer Jackson, President and CEO of the Connecticut Hospital Association**. "The Connecticut Hospital Association joins Connecticut Voices for Children and other members of the coalition in urging our Congressional Delegation to protect funding for these vital programs and not endanger the healthcare coverage and access of the state's most vulnerable citizens."

"The President's proposed 11.5% decrease in federal funding for housing programs will hurt the state's economy and lower our quality of life," said **Lynne Ide, Associate Director of the Connecticut Housing Coalition**. "We know homelessness is on the rise. The last time the state opened up the Section 8 voucher waiting list, there were over 38,000 applications for 1,200 vouchers. A person living in this state must earn \$17.90 per hour to afford a modest two-bedroom apartment, leaving affordable housing out of reach for roughly 76,000 households. In 2006, cuts in HUD's Community Development Block Grant program will mean a loss of \$18 million for investment in our state's cities. We cannot absorb this loss."

"Federal nutrition programs bring in over \$312 million dollars to Connecticut. It's already not enough. Connecticut's food pantries are overwhelmed. How can our families sustain any cuts at all?" said **Lucy Nolan, Executive Director of End Hunger Connecticut!**

"The President's 'Strengthening America's Communities' initiative, contained in the budget, would drastically cut the Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) and transfer it from HUD to the Commerce Department. This budget move risks ruining one of the federal government's largest and most successful community development programs. This initiative would not 'strengthen America's cities' – it would instead remove one of the few tools remaining for Connecticut's municipalities to adapt to a quickly-changing economy and maintain an adequate supply of affordable housing and other vital infrastructure," said **Shelby Mertes of the Partnership for Strong Communities**, an advocacy organization that promotes solutions for ending chronic homelessness, creating affordable housing and building economically vibrant communities.

"The proposed cuts demonstrate that a fundamental shift of priorities has been made in federal funding. Programs that support those who are risk have been eliminated or reduced to such an extent that real damage will be done. State budgets will be unable to make up the funds that will be lost, should the cuts be approved. These cuts are simply immoral and unjust," said **Rev.**

Bonita Grubbs, Director of Christian Community Action. “This budget is bad for American and equally bad for Connecticut. We expect Connecticut’s representatives to fight for the right priorities.”

“At a time when the Connecticut legislature must close a \$1.2 billion budget hole, we cannot afford to lose these federal dollars,” said **Ellen Scalettar, Senior Policy Fellow at CT Voices for Children.** “From community development to education, this federal budget proposal will hurt our state’s families and the future of our economy.”

"Of most importance to our work is that \$441 million has been zeroed out in the President's budget for the State Grants portion of the Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities," said **Stephen Ristau, President and CEO of the Governor's Prevention Partnership.** "This program is the only source of funding for school-based prevention that directly targets all of our youth in grades K-12 with drug and alcohol prevention and early intervention services. Every new cohort of youth must have the benefit of prevention efforts to ensure that drug and alcohol use rates continue to decline."

The proposed budget would eliminate funding for the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) that currently provides the “core” funding to Connecticut’s twelve Community Action Agencies. “This proposal to eliminate funding for Community Action could not come at a worse time for our state,” says **E. Phillip McKain, President of the CT Association for Community Action and CEO of CTE, Inc., in Stamford, CT.** “The number of families living in poverty has risen in recent years. Over 8 percent of the total state’s population lives below the poverty line, which is only \$15,670 for a family of three. Some of our cities have some of the highest poverty rates in the country. With Connecticut’s high cost of living, especially in the Stamford area, it is very difficult for families to make ends meet. Our state’s economy is still struggling and job creation has been slow. Community Action provides families the opportunities to improve their lives. CAAs provide the hope that they can do better and someday reach self-sufficiency.”

The news conference was sponsored by Connecticut Voices for Children, a research-based policy and advocacy organization, in partnership with over 60 Connecticut organizations concerned about the impact of the federal budget on Connecticut.

-END-

To: Senator Dodd Senator Lieberman
 Representative DeLauro Representative Larson
 Representative Johnson Representative Shays
 Representative Simmons

From: The Undersigned
Re: Federal Budget
Date: February 2005

We write to express our deep concern about the impact of President Bush's proposed budget on Connecticut's residents and businesses, and to urge you to do all you can to assure that the budget ultimately approved by Congress does not cause severe, long term harm to the children, seniors, veterans, families, and businesses of our state.

Connecticut, which is facing its own budget deficit, can ill afford to absorb the cost shift that will inevitably occur if the federal government withdraws its support for programs and services that rely in whole or part on federal funds.

In the current state fiscal year, 16.3% of Connecticut state budget revenues come from the federal government (\$2.47 billion). What's more, a total of \$28.6 billion in federal revenue came into Connecticut in FY 03 through direct payments to individuals (such as social security, veterans benefits, and unemployment compensation) as well as through grants to the state, federal contracts, transportation funding, and grants for medical research, to name just a few examples.

We ask that you:

1. Oppose cuts in federal funding for vital domestic programs, whether they be direct cuts or indirect reductions through block grants, entitlement caps, or global spending caps;
2. Prevent procedural maneuvers through a budget resolution or through budget reconciliation instructions that will force such cuts to occur over the long term; and
3. Insist upon a balanced approach to budget deficit reduction.

The lives and livelihoods of your constituents are at stake.

We thank you in advance for doing all you can to protect the interests of Connecticut in the upcoming federal budget debate.

Sincerely,

AIDS Life Campaign
Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition
Bridgeport Community Health Center,
Inc
Center for Children's Advocacy at
UCONN Law School
Christian Community Action
Collaborative Center for Justice
CT Academy of Pediatrics
CT AIDS Residence Coalition
CT Alliance for Retired Americans
CT Association for Adult and Continuing
Education
CT Association for Community Action,
Inc.
CT Association for Human Services
CT Association for the Education of
Young Children
CT Association of Foster and Adoptive
Parents
CT Association of Healthcare Facilities
CT Association of Nonprofits
CT Association of Non-for-Profit
Providers for the Aging
CT Citizen Action Group
CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence
CT Coalition on Aging
CT Conference of Independent Colleges
CT Conference of Municipalities
CT Conference of the United Church of
Christ
CT Council of Family Service Agencies
CT Council on Child & Adolescent
Psychiatry
CT Federation of School Administrators
CT Fund for the Environment
CT Hospital Association
CT Housing Coalition
CT Immigrant and Refugee Coalition

CT Legal Rights Project
CT Legal Services
CT Nonprofit Human Services Cabinet
CT Oral Health Initiative
CT Parent Power
CT Sexual Assault Crisis Services
CT Voices for Children
Danbury Children First, Inc.
Department of CT, Disabled American
Veterans
District 1199 New England Health Care
Employees Union, SEIU
Easter Seals
End Hunger Connecticut!
Greater Hartford Legal Aid, Inc.
Greater Hartford Literacy Council
Hartford Region YWCA
Health Care For All Coalition
League of Women Voters of CT
Legal Assistance Resource Center of CT
Middlesex Coalition for Children
National Association of Social Workers,
Connecticut
New Haven Legal Assistance Association
One Connecticut
Partnership for Strong Communities
Planned Parenthood of Connecticut
Prevent Child Abuse Connecticut
Senior Resources-Eastern CT Area
Agency on Aging
Southwest Community Health Center
TEAM, Inc.
The Community Relations Commission of the
Jewish Federation of Eastern Fairfield County
The Connecticut Women's Consortium
The Governor's Prevention Partnership
The Greater Bridgeport Section of the
National Council of Jewish Women, Inc.
United Way of Connecticut