

NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS OPPOSING THE BALANCED BUDGET AMENDMENT

April 20, 2016

Dear Representative/Senator:

The 273 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 urgent needs in infrastructure and other areas.

According to a 2011 analysis of a balanced budget amendment by Macroeconomic Advisers, one of the nation's preeminent private economic forecasting firms, had a constitutional balanced budget amendment been in effect in 2012, the necessary budget cuts would have thrown about 15 million more people out of work, doubled the unemployment rate from 9 percent to approximately 18 percent, and caused the economy to shrink by about 17 percent instead of growing. And while the economy was weak in 2012, Macroeconomic Advisers concluded that imposing a balanced budget requirement would be undesirable even if the economy were stronger and the budget already balanced, because it would undermine our ability to counter future downturns. Macroeconomic Advisers found under a balanced budget amendment:

“The economy’s “automatic stabilizers” would be eviscerated, discretionary counter-cyclical fiscal policy would be unconstitutional, and the sole responsibility for macroeconomic stabilization policy would rest with the Fed. The attempt to enforce a [balanced budget amendment] could well end up heightening fiscal uncertainty while magnifying cyclical risks to the economy.”

In addition, most 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 the 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 repeated difficulties in raising the debt limit over the past several years illustrate how hard it can be to secure the necessary votes even when an increase is urgently needed to avoid imminent default. Only six of the last 15 debt limit increases obtained a three-fifths vote in both chambers.

In short, a balanced budget amendment is a recipe for making recessions more frequent, longer, and deeper, while requiring severe cuts that very likely would harshly affect seniors, children, veterans, and people with disabilities, as well as national security, homeland security activities, public health and safety, environmental protection, education and medical research. And it would almost certainly necessitate massive cuts in major programs such as Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and veterans' benefits.

It would be a serious mistake to insert a balanced budget amendment or other fiscal policy mandates into the Constitution of the United States. Our Constitution has served the nation well in part because it has focused on enduring principles of government, rather than attempting to dictate fiscal policy for current and future generations. Policymakers should be providing leadership on fiscal policy, rather than avoiding doing so and seeking to cover themselves by writing a highly ill-advised, economically damaging balanced budget amendment into the Constitution.

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

Sincerely,

9to5, National Association of Working Women
AASA, The School Superintendents Association
ADAP Advocacy Association (aaa+)
Advance CTE
Advocates for Youth
African American Health Alliance
AIDS Alliance for Women, Infants, Children, Youth & Families
AIDS Community Research Initiative of America
AIDS United
Alliance for a Just Society D535
Alliance for Excellent Education
Alliance for Justice
Alliance for Retired Americans
Alliance for Strong Families and Communities
American Association for Dental Research
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American Council on Education
American Counseling Association
American Dance Therapy Association
American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO
American Federation of Labor (AFL-CIO)
American Federation of School Administrators (AFSA)
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)
American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO
American Indian Higher Education Consortium
American Jewish Committee (AJC)
American Music Therapy Association
American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR)
American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO
American Public Health Association
American School Counselor Association
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
Americans for Democratic Action (ADA)
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF)
Asian Americans Advancing Justice – AAJC
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO (APALA)
Association for Career and Technical Education

Association for Psychological Science
Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs (ATAP)
Association of Educational Service Agencies
Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs
Association of Flight Attendants - CWA
Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO)
Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD)
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
Autism National Committee
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Bienestar Human Services
B'nai B'rith International
Bread for the World
Campaign for America's Future
Campaign for Youth Justice
Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good
Center for Community Change Action
Center for Family Policy and Practice
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Center for Medicare Advocacy, Inc.
Center for Science in the Public Interest
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
Child Care Aware of America
Child Welfare League of America
Children's Action Alliance
Children's Defense Fund
Children's Dental Health Project
Children's Leadership Council
Citizens for Tax Justice
Clinical Social Work Association
Coalition for Health Funding
Coalition on Human Needs
Commission on Adult Basic Education (COABE)
Committee for Education Funding
Common Cause
Communications Workers of America (CWA)
Community Access National Network (CANN)
Community Action Partnership
Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA)
Concerned Black Men National
Conservation Legacy
Corporation for Enterprise Development (CFED)
Corporation for Supportive Housing
CoSN - the Consortium for School Networking
Council for Exceptional Children
Council for Opportunity in Education
Council of Administrators of Special Education, Inc.
Council of the Great City Schools
CREDO

Criminalization of Poverty Project at the Institute for Policy Studies
Defenders of Wildlife
Democracy 21
Demos
Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO
Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund
Disciples Justice Action Network
Easter Seals
Ecumenical Poverty Initiative
Every Child Matters
FamiliesUSA
Farmworker Justice
Feeding America
First Focus Campaign for Children
Food & Water Watch
Food Research & Action Center (FRAC)
Foster Family-based Treatment Association
Franciscan Action Network
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Friends of the Earth
Futures Without Violence
Gamaliel
Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC)
Generations United
Global Justice Institute
Health GAP (Global Access Project)
Higher Education Consortium for Special Education
Housing Works
Interfaith Worker Justice
International Association of Fire Fighters
International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers
International Brotherhood of Boilermakers
International Brotherhood of Teamsters
International Federation of Professional & Technical Engineers (IFPTE), AFL-CIO
International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE)
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Jobs With Justice
Justice in Aging
LeadingAge
League of Conservation Voters
League of United Latin American Citizens
League of Women Voters of the United States
Learning Disabilities Association of America
Main Street Alliance
Medical Mission Sisters, North America
Medicare Rights Center
Mental Health America
Metropolitan Community Churches
MomsRising

NAACP
NASTAD (National Alliance of State & Territorial AIDS Directors)
National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys
National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association (NARFE)
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity (NAPE)
National Alliance of HUD Tenants
National Alliance to End Sexual Violence
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 and City Health Officials
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors
National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of Federally Impacted Schools
National Association of Letter Carriers
National Association of Private Special Education Centers
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Association of Social Workers (NASW)
National Association of State Directors of Special Education
National Association of State Head Injury Administrators
National Black Justice Coalition
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 CAPACD)
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare
National Community Development Association
National Congress of American Indians
National Council for Behavioral Health
National Council for Community and Education Partnerships
National Council of Asian Pacific Americans
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of La Raza (NCLR)
National Council on Independent Living
National Disability Institute
National Disability Rights Network
National Domestic Violence Hotline
National Down Syndrome Congress
National Education Association (NEA)
National Employment Law Project
National Fair Housing Alliance
National Federation of Federal Employees
National Health Care for the Homeless Council

National Hispanic Medical Association
National Housing Law Project
National Housing Trust
National Immigration Law Center
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund
National Low Income Housing Coalition
National Network to End Domestic Violence
National Organization for Women
National Partnership for Women & Families
National People's Action
National Priorities Project
National PTA
National Recreation and Park Association
National Respite Coalition
National Rural Education Advocacy Coalition
National Rural Education Association
National School Boards Association
National Skills Coalition
National Superintendents Roundtable
National Treasury Employees Union
NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE
National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable
National WIC Association
National Women's Health Network
National Women's Law Center
Natural Resources Defense Council
NDD United
Network for Environmental & Economic Responsibility of United Church of Christ
NETWORK: A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
Not Dead Yet
OWL-The Voice of Women 40+
PAI
Paralyzed Veterans of America
Partnership for America's Children
People for the American Way
PICO National Network
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Prevention Institute
Professional Aviation Safety Specialists (PASS)
Progressive Congress
Project Inform
ProLiteracy
Protect All Children's Environment
Public Advocacy for Kids
Public Citizen
Public Health Institute
Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities Coalition
RESULTS

Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
School Social Work Association of America
School-Based Health Alliance
Senior Executives Association (SEA)
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
Share Our Strength
Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Congregational Leadership
Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Western Province Leadership
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)
Special Needs Alliance
State Innovation Exchange (SiX)
Stewards of Affordable Housing for the Future
Susan G. Komen
TESOL International Association
The AIDS Institute
The Arc
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
The National Coalition for Literacy
The National Crittenton Foundation
The Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, Institute Justice Team
The United Methodist Church – General Board of Church and Society
Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO
Treatment Action Group (TAG)
Tremor Action Network
Trust for America's Health (TFAH)
UNCF
Union for Reform Judaism
United Auto Workers (UAW)
United Cerebral Palsy
United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries
United Spinal Association
United States Student Association (USSA)
United Steelworkers (USW)
USAction
Voices for Progress
Women's Institute for a Secure Retirement (WISER)
Young Invincibles
YouthBuild USA
ZERO TO THREE