

Health Care for the Homeless Mobilizer

The National Health Care for the Homeless Council

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The 100-Day Plan to End Homelessness (Fourth in a Series)

Accomplishments during the first 100 days often are the public measure of newly-elected Presidents and Congresses. As the 110th Congress continues its work, the National Health Care for the Homeless Council proposes a series of measures that would diminish the crisis of mass homelessness in our country

Item Four: Improve the FY 2008 Budget

The Administration articulates a desire “to promote fiscal responsibility and address growing inequality,” however its proposed \$2.9 trillion budget plan for FY 2008 – which includes a significant increase in military spending – undermines these proclaimed priorities. Submitted to Congress earlier this month, the plan would allocate an additional \$245 billion for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan while cutting spending for education, the environment, health and human services, and other interior departments. In addition to reducing overall spending for Medicare and Medicaid, the Administration’s proposal maintains a regressive tax policy and provides insufficient funds to maintain enrollment levels in the Children’s Health Insurance Program, thus threatening to push more children into the ranks of the uninsured. The budget as a whole insufficiently reflects the important domestic priorities necessary to make homelessness increasingly *rare and brief*. And the proposed reductions in health care spending to finance military conflicts in the Middle East will only further widen the gap between rich and poor. The National Health Care for the Homeless Council calls upon *Mobilizer* readers to oppose additional military spending at the expense of health, housing, human services, and other domestic needs.

The Price We Pay for Civilization

Taxes, after all, are dues that we pay for the privileges of membership in an organized society. ~Franklin D. Roosevelt

The late conservative Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. agreed with President Roosevelt that taxes are the method for achieving our nation’s collective aspirations. Unfortunately, the Administration’s budget proposal fails to address the current inequities in our taxation system and seriously compromises the pursuit of necessary initiatives to improve access to comprehensive health care, affordable housing, and livable incomes. Designed to balance the budget by 2012 without raising taxes, the

Administration's budget plan would make permanent the tax cuts enacted in 2001 and 2003 and continue to exempt the wealthiest Americans from paying their fair share of the nation's tax bill. According to the Tax Policy Center, people with incomes of more than \$1 million would receive tax cuts averaging \$160,000 per year (in 2012 dollars). If maintained, our regressive taxation policy would cost America \$374 billion and would eradicate nearly \$100 billion from Medicare and Medicaid over the next five years.

Budget Stifles Health Center Expansion

Over the past several years, Congress has strongly supported the Administration's initiative to expand the reach of the nation's Health Centers to address the unmet needs of vulnerable communities. Increased funding has allowed Health Care for the Homeless projects to extend their health services to serve approximately 650,000 people a year and, overall, Health Centers have served an additional 5 million *more* people. The need is still great, as there remain many millions of people without access to healthcare, including an estimated 2 million or more homeless people. Unfortunately, the FY 2008 budget plan threatens to stall this momentum to strengthen Health Center capacity. The Administration's FY08 plan allocates \$1.988 billion for Health Centers, a very slight increase in funding from the previous year. Though it would fund a second expansion initiative to place new Health Centers in certain high poverty communities, the budget plan does not allow for sufficient growth to meet the need nationally and appears to pose a funding freeze, thus harmfully limiting the expansion of services.

ACTION

The FY 2008 budget proposal threatens to weaken the health care safety net, increase the ranks of the uninsured, and cause additional vulnerable Americans to experience homelessness. The National Council urges *Mobilizer* readers to use your influence now and throughout the budgeting process to advance national priorities necessary to reduce poverty and end homelessness.

- **Read the National Council's policy statement on Homelessness and Health** at <http://www.nhchc.org/Advocacy/PolicyPapers/HomelessHealth2006.pdf>
- **Call or write your Members of Congress today** to respond to the Administration's budget proposal. Ask them to continue the necessary expansion of the health care safety net by appropriating additional funds for Health Centers. Call your Members of Congress through the Capitol switchboard at 202-224-2131, or find contact information at www.house.gov and www.senate.gov.
- **For more information** contact the National Council's Health Policy Organizer, Adrienne Breidenstine, at 443-703-1337.

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