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Budgets Affect People, Not Just the Bottom Line.

***Take Two Minutes and Call Your Elected Officials about
the Fiscal Cliff and Renewed Budget Battles!***

The 2012 Election is over and the deficit reduction debate is now the key item for action. Compromise on spending and revenue, which has eluded Congress over the last two years, will be necessary for Congress to avoid the so-called 'fiscal cliff'. **Any agreement will have consequences for homeless services for years to come. Your representatives will not likely be thinking of the impact on homeless people or the programs that serve them unless they hear from you.**

It takes an average of two minutes to make a call and either record a message or speak to a staff person. Making that call will help ensure that the most vulnerable are considered when legislators are making decisions about affordable housing and health care programs.



TAKE ACTION

An agreement to reduce the deficit and address other year-end fiscal issues may happen quickly, so it is essential that the HCH community act now by contacting both the Administration and Congress. The White House constituent line where you can leave a message with the operator is **(202) 456-1111**. The Congressional Switchboard where you can be connected to your Representatives' and Senators' offices is **(877) 210-5351**. Leave a message or ask to speak with a staffer who handles budgetary issues or deficit reduction.

The main message is that homelessness and poverty will only increase if cuts to support programs are included in any agreement on deficit reduction. The staff members you speak with may say that only the Congressional Leadership is involved in the negotiations. While mostly true, their bosses can still speak to their leadership and relay their concerns. **Ask them to speak to their leadership and ensure that safety net programs such as those listed below are not slashed as a result of deficit reduction!**

Specific talking points include the following:

- **Do not cut domestic discretionary programs**, including health centers and low-income housing programs. Use examples of what these programs do for your community.
- **Do not cut Medicaid.** Any cuts to Medicaid (or shifts to a block grant or capped program) will simply shift costs to states and undermine the Medicaid Expansion included in the Affordable Care Act. Use examples of what Medicaid Expansion will mean for your project and patients, including increased employment at your health center.
- **Do not cut mandatory low-income programs like SNAP (food stamps), the Earned Income Tax Credit, and SSI.** These are not the drivers of our deficit and cuts will only increase poverty and hunger. Use examples from your project of how these programs aid the needy.

- **Increase revenue - it is the only way to reduce the deficit and prevent increased poverty.** The deficit cannot be solved through cuts alone.

While the deficit reduction issue seems complicated, it will directly affect homelessness. Because most of the focus has been on middle class benefits, it is up to Mobilizer readers and other advocates to speak out for lower income groups. **Please spend two minutes to call your Elected Officials and help them understand the connection between the government's balance sheet and the real human impact of safety net cuts.**

Additional Background Information (Full Election/Lame Duck Analysis [HERE](#))

Action to reduce the deficit is likely to occur in the coming weeks and months, but proposals are being prepared now. The impending 'fiscal cliff' changes consisting of automatic tax increases, defense cuts, and domestic cuts to programs like health centers and low-income housing are set to start on January 1, 2013 and are viewed as bad policy by a wide range of legislators.

To stabilize the debt, \$4 trillion must be cut and/or created. Achieving this in cuts alone would decimate essential governmental functions, including antipoverty programs, but the balance of spending cuts and revenue increases still must be worked out. The more revenue increases, the fewer cuts to programs and the smaller the impact on low-income Americans.

The six week Lame Duck Session lasting from now until the end of the year is not enough time to work out the details of a large deficit reduction package. Some form of 'down payment' allowing the automatic cuts and tax increases to be delayed for several months will likely be agreed upon, as well as a framework outlining the general sources and dollar amounts of deficit reduction in a larger agreement to be worked out next year. Cuts to the safety net could be included in the 'down payment,' and the targets of reductions in the framework might not shield safety net programs. You can help balance the many calls being made to protect the defense budget and the status quo for the highest earners.

Contact [Dan Rabbitt](#) with any questions, for more information, or to talk about your call - it can yield an interesting conversation!

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