

Dear Representative

On behalf of the 1.5 million members of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), I urge you to oppose the budget plan introduced this week in the U.S. House of Representatives by Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio), the Budget Control Act of 2011 (the House amendment to S. 627), as well as any constitutional balanced budget amendment.

There is widespread agreement that our nation's growing deficit must be addressed: This ill-conceived proposal fails to offer a balanced approach to decreasing the deficit. Instead of requiring shared sacrifice, the Boehner plan places the entire burden on the backs of seniors, the middle class and our nation's most vulnerable citizens, while doing nothing to close corporate tax giveaways and increase taxes on those most able to afford them.

The Boehner plan calls for large cuts in discretionary programs of \$1.2 trillion over the next 10 years through strict new spending caps. Most experts predict that the first round of cuts would target discretionary programs, including education, infrastructure, job training and law enforcement. The plan would then require an additional \$1.8 trillion in savings to be identified by the end of the year as a condition for raising the debt ceiling again at that time. Given the magnitude of these additional required savings, it is likely that one of the three following scenarios would occur: (1) deep cuts in federal entitlement programs such as Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid; (2) repeal of health reform's coverage expansions; or (3) dramatic reduction in safety net programs for vulnerable Americans, such as food stamps and unemployment and disability insurance. Each of these scenarios not only is unacceptable, each is avoidable *if* corporations and the wealthy are required to shoulder a fair share of this burden.

In addition, Speaker Boehner's plan requires a vote on an ill-advised constitutional balanced budget amendment in both chambers of Congress by the end of this year. The details surrounding exactly which proposed constitutional balanced budget amendment will be voted on are unclear. However, earlier proposals that have appeared in the House of Representatives, including H.J.Res. 1, would have a devastating impact on discretionary spending and on our modest economic recovery.

Finally, as noted above, the Boehner proposal provides only a short-term extension of the federal debt ceiling. This means that the gridlock that now prevails in our government will continue for the remainder of the 112th Congress. Recent reports have suggested that rating agencies will downgrade the U.S. credit rating if the Boehner proposal is enacted. This would result not only in higher interest costs to the federal government but also would raise the interest rate paid by individuals

and families on car loans, credit cards and mortgages throughout the United States. Taken together, all of these factors would undermine the nation's fragile recovery.

For these reasons, the AFT urges a NO vote on the Budget Control Act of 2011 and on any constitutional balanced budget amendment.

Thank you for considering our views on this important matter.