



THE FAITHFUL  
BUDGET CAMPAIGN

# 2016 Budget: The Faithful Way Forward

A congressional briefing brought to you by:

**NETWORK**

25 E St. NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20001 • 202.347.9797

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## **THE SCRIPTURAL CALL**

for the

## **FAITHFUL BUDGET**

**Communities of faith call for a compassionate and comprehensive vision for the future.** We urge our elected leaders to craft a budget that promotes the good of every member of society, especially those who are poor. Our shared traditions insist that faithfulness cannot remain an individual virtue but must also encompass our society's commitment to justice and mercy.

### **Judaism**

**The Book of Isaiah teaches us, as a nation, to know and abide by God's ways.** "Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the bonds of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house when you see them." - Isaiah 58

### **Christianity**

**The Gospels teach us to embrace the just vision presented by Isaiah:** "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." - Luke 4:18-19

### **Islam**

**The Qur'an teaches a piety that is inextricably linked with the spending of money for the betterment of those who are struggling:** "Never shall you attain to true piety unless you spend on others out of what you cherish yourselves; and whatever you spend – verily, God has full knowledge thereof." - The Holy Qur'an 3:92

# Faithful Budget

## Background

In 2011, powerful forces in Washington, D.C. converged to support a federal budget promising to lower the federal deficit by reforming social spending. The proposed cuts were drastic and destructive. Instead of embodying principles of justice and compassion, politicians chose to undermine programs that provided critical assistance to our nation's most vulnerable. At the same time, tax breaks for wealthy corporations and outsized military spending that cost billions of dollars were left intact. That year, the budget passed in the House of Representatives with 235 Representatives voting for it.

In response, faith leaders from Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and other faith communities gathered to collectively write and endorse a "Faithful Budget." These 37 organizations envisioned federal spending that would "protect the common good, value each individual and help lift the burden on the poor." Since its completion in March 2012, faith leaders and faith-based-advocates have continued to promote the "Faithful Budget" as an alternative to the harmful spending cuts and budget limits that threaten our nation's well being.

"A Faithful Budget does more than simply meet the needs of poor and vulnerable people. A Faithful Budget simultaneously promotes economic opportunity, mobility, and security."

*The Faithful Budget, p. 13*

# FAITHFUL BUDGET

## PRINCIPLES

**Restore Economic Opportunity** A Faithful Budget makes the long-term investments needed to sustain economic renewal, create economic opportunity for all, and work toward ending poverty. This requires investments in high-quality, affordable education, sustainable jobs with living wages, and policies that help families to build assets.

**Ensure Adequate Resources for Shared Priorities** A Faithful Budget calls for investment in the renewal of our nation's economic well-being, protecting the poor and vulnerable. This will itself serve to reduce the long-term deficit. Such investment should be financed through an equitable tax system founded on fairness, where those who have reaped extraordinary benefits contribute proportionately to the good of all.

**Prioritize True Human Security** A Faithful Budget reflects a more balanced approach to the full spectrum of investments that build meaningful security for individuals, families, and communities.

**Meet Immediate Needs** A Faithful Budget acknowledges that Congress has the moral and pragmatic responsibility, even as it pursues long-term deficit reduction, to adequately fund critical human needs, social service, environmental protection, and humanitarian and poverty-focused international assistance programs, all of which ensure human security in its broadest sense.

# FAITHFUL BUDGET

## PRINCIPLES

**Accept Intergenerational Responsibility** A Faithful Budget seeks wise and far-sighted ways to reduce the nation’s long-term deficits while protecting the most vulnerable among us. We cannot leave our children a legacy of debt, nor can we leave them a legacy of rising poverty and growing inequality.

**Use the Gifts of Creation Sustainably** A Faithful Budget reveres our created environment and makes choices that protect air, water, and land—the entirety of Creation—gifts from God that must be available to and protected for this generation and to those come.

**Provide Access to Health Care for All** A Faithful Budget ensures access to quality health care by investing in wellness and making needed improvements in the health care system.

**Recognize the Role of Government** A Faithful Budget recognizes the need for government’s continued partnership to overcome poverty. It provides a truly adequate short-term safety net, and creates policies that serve to prevent poverty, reduce extreme inequality, restore economic opportunity for all, and rebuild a robust middle class.

# Safety Net

## The Numbers:

### HOUSE BUDGET

**Cuts Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) by \$125 billion** (more than a third) and makes it a block grant, ending or reducing food assistance for millions of families.

**Cuts Pell Grants** by eliminating the mandatory portion of funding for Pell Grants and freezing the maximum grant level for 10 years, reducing assistance available for students from families with modest incomes to afford college.

**Cuts mandatory programs** that serve low-income Americans by roughly **\$300 billion**.

- Cuts to Child Nutrition Programs

- Cuts to Supplemental Security Income for people who are elderly, disabled or in poverty

- Cuts to Refundable portions of Earned Income & Child Tax Credits

**Cuts non-defense discretionary programs** that support people with low-incomes by about **\$160 billion** while providing no new funding for job creation.

### SENATE BUDGET

**Cuts mandatory programs** that serve low-income Americans by roughly **\$500 billion**.

- Cuts to SNAP

- Cuts to Pell Grants

- Cuts to Child Nutrition Programs

- Cuts to Supplemental Security Income for people who are elderly, disabled or in poverty

- Cuts to refundable portions of Earned Income & Child Tax Credits

**Cuts non-defense discretionary programs** that support low-income people by about **\$120 billion**:

- Cuts to Education & Research

- Cuts to Transportation

- Cuts to Housing Assistance

- Cuts to Head Start

- Cuts to Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

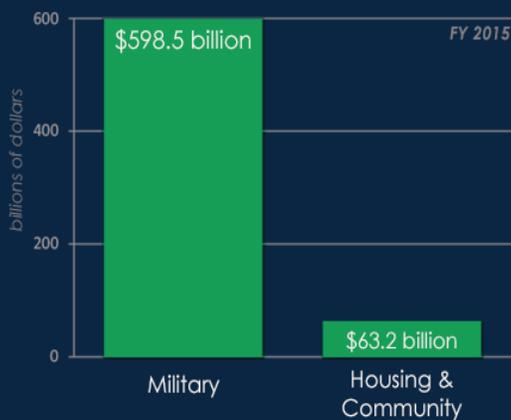
# The Analysis:

“We fulfill our calling as a people as well as our long-term shared interests when we invest in a social safety net that will support the vulnerable in times of hardship such as recession, unemployment, sickness, and old age... Proactive stimulus policies, as well as the elasticity of mandatory safety net programs...are incredibly effective measures that have prevented millions from falling into poverty. **Congress has the moral and pragmatic responsibility, even as it pursues long-term deficit reduction, to serve the common good by adequately funding critical human needs and social services.**” (*The Faithful Budget*, p. 6)

“Living in dignity demands a safe and secure place in which to live.”

-*Faithful Budget*, p. 16

The U.S. currently spends almost 10 times as much on military as on Housing & Community.



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## Talking Points:

- SNAP is the most efficient and effective anti-poverty program in the U.S., with the lowest rates of waste and fraud.
- Cuts to SNAP would end food assistance for millions of low-income families and cut benefits for millions of others.
- The \$300-500 billion in additional cuts would come from programs that serve low-income individuals and families, including child nutrition and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for the elderly and disabled.
- Congress has the moral responsibility to serve the common good by adequately funding critical human needs programs.

**The Bottom Line:** A Faithful Budget takes care of critical necessities for all members of our communities. Current proposals “balance the budget” on the backs of people living in poverty. It is our responsibility to look after our neighbors.

# Healthcare

## The Numbers:

### HOUSE BUDGET

**Cuts health care programs** by **\$3.1 trillion** over the next 10 years, of which **\$2.9 trillion** are reductions for low- and moderate-income people.

**Cuts funding for Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program**, (CHIP) making them block grants.

**Repeals the Affordable Care Act**, including its subsidies and Medicaid expansion. The ACA provides insurance to **16.4 million people**. Repeal of the ACA along with its tax increases results in **\$1 trillion of lost revenue** over 10 years.

### SENATE BUDGET

**Cuts health care programs** by **\$2.9 trillion** over the next 10 years, of which **\$2.5 trillion** are reductions for low- and moderate-income people.

**Cuts funding for Medicaid** by roughly **\$400 billion** over the next 10 years, making it a block grant.

**Cuts funding for Medicare** by roughly **\$435 billion** over the next 10 years.

**Repeals the Affordable Care Act**, including its subsidies and Medicaid expansion. The ACA provides insurance to **16.4 million people**.

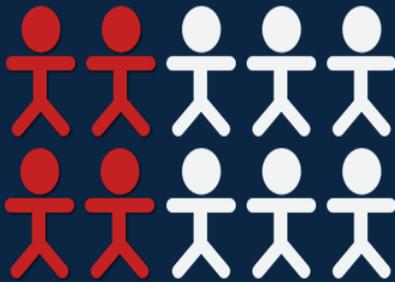
# The Analysis:

“A Faithful Budget embraces a system of **health care that is inclusive, accessible, affordable, and accountable**. Health care is a shared responsibility that is grounded in our common humanity. We are guided by a divine will to treat each person with dignity and to live together as an inclusive community.” (*The Faithful Budget*, p. 25)

“All persons should have access to health services that provide necessary care and contribute to wellness.”

-*Faithful Budget*, p. 25

The House of Representatives has proposed to cut Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP)



by one third by 2025.

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## Talking Points:

- The ACA has helped 16.4 million Americans obtain health insurance, and the uninsured rate has dropped from 20.3% to 13.2%.
- Repealing the ACA would cause millions of Americans to lose their insurance; repealing Medicaid expansion alone would cause 14 million Americans to lose coverage.
- Converting Medicaid into a block grant and cutting funding would force states to eliminate coverage for millions of low-income people.
- Society is whole only when we care for the most vulnerable; we have a responsibility to use our health care resources effectively, efficiently, and equitably.

**The Bottom Line:** A Faithful Budget protects the foundational human right to health care. Current proposals cut essential programs, putting our nation's health at risk. It is our responsibility to ensure that the whole community is healthy.

# Taxes

## The Numbers:

### HOUSE BUDGET

**Lowers tax rates** on corporate income from 35% to 25%. The individual top marginal tax rate would be reduced from 39.6% to 25%. **\$1.7 trillion** would go to households whose income exceeds \$1 million.

**Cuts funding for tax credits** for low-income working families by **\$159 billion**.

**Neglects important tax credits** including the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Tax Credit, increasing the number of people in poverty by **1.8 million**. More than **13 million families** and almost **25 million children** would have their benefits cut by **\$1,073 per family** on average.

**Repeals Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT)**, which ensures that higher income people pay at least a base level of tax. This results in a **\$330 billion loss of revenue**. Repealing the AMT and the ACA's tax provisions would **cut taxes by \$50,000** on average for people whose incomes exceed \$1 million a year.

**Claims to close loopholes** but doesn't specify which ones or how.

### SENATE BUDGET

**Cuts funding for tax credits** for low-income working families by **\$159 billion**.

**Neglects important tax credits** by allowing them to expire, including the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Tax Credit (CTC), increasing the number of people in poverty by **1.8 million**. More than **13 million families** and almost **25 million children** would have their benefits cut by **\$1,073 per family** on average.

# The Analysis:

“We are alarmed at the growing economic divergence between rich and poor, creating permanent inequalities that are neither just nor socially sustainable. Over the past thirty years, **tax policy has too often been used to perpetuate rather than address these inequalities**...We need a more progressive tax code, where all members of the community carry their fair share of the responsibility, not only to ensure that we can meet immediate need while simultaneously reducing our deficits, but also to begin to address the astronomical growth in disparity over the last thirty years. As one of our traditions so eloquently says, **“from everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required.”** (*The Faithful Budget*, p. 23)

“We need a more progressive tax code, where all members of the community carry their fair share of the responsibility.”

-*Faithful Budget*, p. 23

The **\$65 billion** lost to



offshore  
corporate  
tax  
loopholes

could fund scholarships  
for



**6.7 million**  
university students.

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## Talking Points:

- Current tax policies put higher proportional burdens on those who are middle class and poorer; the amount realized is insufficient to meet this country’s pressing social needs.
- We are tolerating immoral tax laws when we allow tax minimization strategies, whether individual or corporate, to shift payment for shared goods to those who have less.
- Credits like the EITC and the Child Tax Credit, help lift families out of poverty and are essential to a just tax system.
- A Faithful Budget would not reduce the deficit by increasing poverty, nor would it provide tax relief to the wealthy, at the expense of those living in poverty.

**The Bottom Line:** A Faithful Budget promotes the financial well being of every member of society. Current proposals deepen economic inequality. We have a responsibility to ensure that everyone has enough.

# Defense Spending

## The Numbers:

### HOUSE BUDGET

Aims to “balance the budget” in under 10 years by **cutting \$5.3 trillion in non-defense spending.**

Technically adheres to sequestration, but effectively sidesteps caps by allocating money into the “Overseas Contingency Operations” fund.

\$523 billion for Pentagon base budget  
**\$90 billion in additional war funding**  
\$613 billion total

### SENATE BUDGET

Aims to “balance the budget” in 10 years by **cutting \$4.7 trillion in non-defense spending.**

Technically adheres to sequestration, but effectively sidesteps caps by allocating money into the “Overseas Contingency Operations” fund.

\$523 billion for Pentagon base budget  
**\$58 billion in additional war funding**  
\$581 billion total

# The Analysis:

“In recent years, the conversation over federal budgets has focused narrowly on how to reduce or eliminate the budget deficit, as if the highest goal of government were merely to achieve a row of zeroes on our nation’s financial ledger. **The budget deficit must not be the only barometer of our nation’s well-being.**” (*The Faithful Budget*, p. 4)

## Talking Points:

- Because of sequestration and committees’ curtailment of spending, safety net programs have already been severely cut, by an average of 16% from 2010-2015.
- At the same time, defense spending has increased 30% in the last ten years.
- The House and the Senate propose an additional \$90 billion in “war funding” through the Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) fund, though little of this would actually go toward fighting ISIS.
- The OCO fund has minimal direction or oversight and is considered by some to be a military slush fund.
- A Faithful Budget invests in conflict prevention and does not sacrifice protection of the vulnerable for the sake of increasing militarization.

“Our nation now allocates well over half its discretionary budget to the Pentagon as a result of sharp military spending increases that began in 1998 and continued for over a decade. At the same time we have invested heavily in more militarized border security and a proliferation of private prisons.”

-*Faithful Budget*, p. 6

Compared to 1998, the U.S. spends

89%  
more

on Customs &  
Border Security

61%  
more

on the Federal  
Prison System

55%  
more

on the Pentagon

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**The Bottom Line:** A Faithful Budget prioritizes true human security over disproportionate military spending. Current proposals claim to “balance the budget” while increasing war funding; this is simply smoke and mirrors. We have a responsibility to be honest about how we’re using our nation’s resources.

# FAITHFUL BUDGET

## QUOTES

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“In the Five Books of Moses, we learn of our responsibility to others: “If your kinsman becomes impoverished and his hand (assets) become shaky among you, then you must support him [so to] the stranger” (Leviticus 25:35). Throughout this country, our neighbors, our fellow congregants, and those within our own families are struggling. Each of us must hear the call to action and advocate for important social safety net programs that can lift up those in need.”

- Rabbi Jonah Dov Pesner, Director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism

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"The Prophet Muhammad taught that a community is like one body. If one part is in pain, the rest should take every measure to alleviate its suffering. Our nation has a moral responsibility to ensure that ours is a healthy community, by addressing social, economic, and physical disparities in access to health care and other basic services.

The Qur'an teaches us that true righteousness does not come from faith alone, but also from spending on others out of what we cherish for ourselves. A nation with as many resources as ours should not allow anyone to go without food, shelter, health care, or other basic services."

- Ms. Maggie Mitchell Siddiqi, Program Director of American Muslim Health Professionals

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“As a follower of Christianity, I believe that "to whom much is given, much will be required." God's justice insists that those who have much must contribute to the good of all. Indeed, God's vision of shalom wants a society in which each of us has enough -- not too much and not too little. We are living in a New Gilded Age where the gap between rich and poor grows ever deeper. Today's worship of money and things is nothing less than idolatry and justice requires us to change if we are going to live up to God's radical vision for us. Responsible taxation is a linchpin of democratic society and from a Christian perspective, greater tax justice is a necessary and key response to rising inequality.”

- Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II, Director of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Office of Public Witness

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“To whom should we go first?” Pope Francis’s question rings true as we seek new budget priorities for fiscal year 2016. Our different faith traditions agree that Congress should not simply respond to those with the loudest voices whose money and political clout promote their own self-interest. Rather, our elected leaders must consider those whose voices are intentionally ignored, those who can’t rely on wealth or powerful connections to ensure that their needs are addressed.”

- Sr. Simone Campbell , Executive Director of NETWORK

# ABOUT NETWORK

## OUR MISSION

NETWORK—a Catholic leader in the global movement for justice and peace—educates, organizes and lobbies for economic and social transformation.

## ABOUT US (Our Values and What We Do)

Founded by Catholic sisters in the progressive spirit of Vatican II, NETWORK works to create a society that promotes justice and the dignity of all in the shared abundance of God's creation.

Inspired by our founders and the leadership of the women who followed, we faithfully embody Gospel justice as we ignite hope in the world. We are rooted in the Catholic social justice tradition and open to all who share our passion.

Believing in the power of community, our Spirit-filled network of justice-seekers shapes federal policies to be consistent with **the values we hold**:

### **A just society includes all and values people over the accumulation of profits.**

- We work to change structures that cause poverty and inequality, placing the needs of people at the economic margins and excluded at the center of our advocacy.
- We work for a federal budget that benefits everyone and a just tax system that ensures that all pay their fair share.
- We work to ensure inclusion of everyone in our economy and democracy.

### **A just society ensures that all people - the 100% - have what they need to live dignified lives.**

- We work for justly compensated jobs and quality healthcare for all.
- We work to protect the rights of immigrants and all who struggle at the margins.
- We work for affordable housing, food assistance and safety-net programs for all who need them.

### **A just society recognizes that we live in an interconnected world.**

- We work for nonviolent solutions to conflict.
- We work to alleviate unequal burdens created by climate change.
- We work for trade policies that are rooted in justice and that protect all.

“I beg the Lord to grant us more politicians who are genuinely disturbed by the state of society, the people, the lives of the poor!”

Pope Francis, *Joy of the Gospel*



Download the Faithful Budget at:  
[www.networklobby.org/files/FaithfulBudget2016.pdf](http://www.networklobby.org/files/FaithfulBudget2016.pdf)

For an online version of this packet & to download graphics:  
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