

Preparing for Pushback

1. **There are hungry people in the United States. Why should we spend taxpayer dollars on international poverty-focused development assistance?**

- Globally, nearly 800 million people are hungry, and malnutrition causes approximately half of all deaths of children under age 5 (3.1 million children) each year. Hunger and malnutrition prevent millions of people in developing countries from living healthy, productive lives and stunt the mental and physical development of future generations.
- Foreign assistance is a vital tool within our foreign policy strategy. At less than 1 percent of the total federal budget, foreign assistance is some of the most impactful money we spend. Poverty-focused development assistance programs, including initiatives like Feed the Future, help to stabilize weak and fragile states, build economic prosperity by driving growth, and promote U.S. moral leadership around the world. As Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) said in February, “When I hear if we cut foreign aid we can balance the budget, it’s just a complete lie. Foreign assistance is an insurance policy. Investing over there, even though we have needs here, makes us safer.”
- *For more information, see the [Poverty-focused Development Assistance \(PFDA\) 101 fact sheet](#) in this packet.*

2. **Our government has a spending problem, and our debt is on an unsustainable path. We have to live with the additional cuts to discretionary programs like foreign aid.**

- Cuts to lifesaving poverty-focused development assistance have real life or death consequences. Fewer farmers will have access to programs that help them grow their way out of poverty. Mothers and their children (particularly in the critical 1,000-days window) will lose access to nutrition interventions and treatments, leaving them vulnerable to stunting. As we potentially face the largest humanitarian crisis since World War II, almost 13 million people could be cut off from lifesaving food aid; and over 1 million people could lose access to safe and sustainable water sources, and/or sanitation services that prevent the spread of disease.
- *For more information, see the [Consequences of Sequestration](#) fact sheet in this packet.*

3. **Does all U.S. foreign assistance get wasted or sent to corrupt governments? Should we overhaul USAID & the State Department to make them more efficient?**

- The United States does not provide most of its poverty-reducing aid directly to foreign governments. Instead, it is distributed through U.S.-based NGOs, including many faith-based organizations. There are checks in place to minimize the risk of fraud and abuse. If done right, foreign assistance can push local institutions to do the right thing and increase accountability to both their citizens and U.S. taxpayers.
- Slashing the budgets of the State Department and USAID is not reform and will not improve the effectiveness of these institutions. Instead, it will hamper the progress that has already been made toward more effective overseas aid. Reform should be

based on sound policies guided by proven aid effectiveness principles. Congress should oppose dramatic cuts to foreign assistance, and instead provide the necessary resources to ensure our security, reaffirm U.S. global leadership, and maintain the positive bipartisan trajectory toward sensible, policy-based reform.

4. Cuts to SNAP (formerly known as food Stamps) and Medicaid are necessary “to maintain the integrity of the program” or “to make sure the truly needy receive it.”

- SNAP is already an effective and efficient program that reaches exactly whom it’s supposed to. The average SNAP household has a gross monthly income of \$786, well below the strict national income limits. Eighty-three percent of SNAP households have incomes below the poverty line, which is \$24,250 for a family of four.
- Eighty-two percent of all SNAP benefits go to the most vulnerable households—those with children, elderly, or disabled people. In fact, roughly 1.7 million veterans live in households that participated in SNAP at some point during the past 12 months, and about 980,000 veterans lived in households that participated in SNAP in an average month in 2013.
- More than half of Medicaid recipients are children, and more than one-third of all U.S. children rely on Medicaid for their health care. *For more information, see [The Hunger-Medicaid Connections](#) fact sheet in this packet.*
- Structural changes to SNAP or Medicaid—whether a block grant, per capita cap, or shifting of costs to the states—will hurt the programs’ ability to respond to increases in need and will result in increased hunger and hardship in our country. *For more information, see the [Budget 101: Block Grants, Flexibility, and Per Capita Caps](#) fact sheet in this packet.*

5. What do you propose we cut instead? Where is the money to support programs for hungry people supposed to come from?

- Congress should look to a combination of revenue increases (closing tax loopholes and tax expenditures) and responsible entitlement cuts that won’t hurt vulnerable populations.
- Most of the deficit reduction enacted over the past few years has already come from nondefense appropriated spending programs, the same programs that the Trump budget and current spending caps hit especially hard. It’s time for a more balanced approach.
- In the United States, the health-related costs of hunger and food insecurity to our economy are a staggering \$160 billion. Investments in anti-hunger programs and anti-poverty policies will curb future costs.

6. Charitable and private responses to hunger are more efficient and caring than government programs.

- Ending hunger and poverty requires strong partnerships between the federal government, state and local governments, and local communities. Churches and individuals through private charity alone cannot serve every person who is hungry.
- Including SNAP and child nutrition programs, the U.S. government provides 20 times more food assistance than private charity. Federal nutrition programs ensure that struggling families and individuals—regardless of what state they live in—have access to the food they need to thrive.

- Cuts of the magnitude included in the Trump budget cannot be made up by churches and charity. Proposed cuts to SNAP, Medicaid, refundable tax credits, and TANF (the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) alone would require religious congregation in the United States to raise nearly \$250,000 a year for 10 years to make up the difference.