

# NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS OPPOSING THE BALANCED BUDGET AMENDMENT

April 20, 2016

Dear Representative/Senator:

The 273 undersigned national organizations strongly urge you to oppose any balanced budget amendment to the United States Constitution.

A balanced budget constitutional amendment would damage the economy, not strengthen it. Demanding that policymakers cut spending and/or raise taxes even when the economy slows is the opposite of what is needed to stabilize a weak economy and avert recessions. Such steps would risk tipping a faltering economy into recession or worsening an ongoing downturn, costing large numbers of jobs while blocking worthy investments to stimulate jobs and growth and address urgent needs in infrastructure and other areas.

According to a 2011 analysis of a balanced budget amendment by Macroeconomic Advisers, one of the nation's preeminent private economic forecasting firms, had a constitutional balanced budget amendment been in effect in 2012, the necessary budget cuts would have thrown about 15 million more people out of work, doubled the unemployment rate from 9 percent to approximately 18 percent, and caused the economy to shrink by about 17 percent instead of growing. And while the economy was weak in 2012, Macroeconomic Advisers concluded that imposing a balanced budget requirement would be undesirable even if the economy were stronger and the budget already balanced, because it would undermine our ability to counter future downturns. Macroeconomic Advisers found under a balanced budget amendment:

*“The economy’s “automatic stabilizers” would be eviscerated, discretionary counter-cyclical fiscal policy would be unconstitutional, and the sole responsibility for macroeconomic stabilization policy would rest with the Fed. The attempt to enforce a [balanced budget amendment] could well end up heightening fiscal uncertainty while magnifying cyclical risks to the economy.”*

In addition, most versions of the balanced budget amendment being considered also contain a provision requiring three-fifths of the whole membership of both houses to raise the debt limit, making the risk of default more likely and empowering a willful minority to hold the full faith and credit of the U.S. hostage to whatever other political demands they may have. The repeated difficulties in raising the debt limit over the past several years illustrate how hard it can be to secure the necessary votes even when an increase is urgently needed to avoid imminent default. Only six of the last 15 debt limit increases obtained a three-fifths vote in both chambers.

In short, a balanced budget amendment is a recipe for making recessions more frequent, longer, and deeper, while requiring severe cuts that very likely would harshly affect seniors, children, veterans, and people with disabilities, as well as national security, homeland security activities, public health and safety, environmental protection, education and medical research. And it would almost certainly necessitate massive cuts in major programs such as Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and veterans' benefits.

It would be a serious mistake to insert a balanced budget amendment or other fiscal policy mandates into the Constitution of the United States. Our Constitution has served the nation well in part because it has focused on enduring principles of government, rather than attempting to dictate fiscal policy for current and future generations. Policymakers should be providing leadership on fiscal policy, rather than avoiding doing so and seeking to cover themselves by writing a highly ill-advised, economically damaging balanced budget amendment into the Constitution.

We strongly urge you to oppose any constitutional balanced budget amendment.

Sincerely,

9to5, National Association of Working Women  
AASA, The School Superintendents Association  
ADAP Advocacy Association (aaa+)  
Advance CTE  
Advocates for Youth  
African American Health Alliance  
AIDS Alliance for Women, Infants, Children, Youth & Families  
AIDS Community Research Initiative of America  
AIDS United  
Alliance for a Just Society D535  
Alliance for Excellent Education  
Alliance for Justice  
Alliance for Retired Americans  
Alliance for Strong Families and Communities  
American Association for Dental Research  
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education  
American Association of University Women (AAUW)  
American Council on Education  
American Counseling Association  
American Dance Therapy Association  
American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO  
American Federation of Labor (AFL-CIO)  
American Federation of School Administrators (AFSA)  
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)  
American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO  
American Indian Higher Education Consortium  
American Jewish Committee (AJC)  
American Music Therapy Association  
American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR)  
American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO  
American Public Health Association  
American School Counselor Association  
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association  
Americans for Democratic Action (ADA)  
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF)  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice – AAJC  
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO (APALA)  
Association for Career and Technical Education

Association for Psychological Science  
Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs (ATAP)  
Association of Educational Service Agencies  
Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs  
Association of Flight Attendants - CWA  
Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO)  
Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD)  
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America  
Autism National Committee  
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law  
Bienestar Human Services  
B'nai B'rith International  
Bread for the World  
Campaign for America's Future  
Campaign for Youth Justice  
Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good  
Center for Community Change Action  
Center for Family Policy and Practice  
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)  
Center for Medicare Advocacy, Inc.  
Center for Science in the Public Interest  
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities  
Child Care Aware of America  
Child Welfare League of America  
Children's Action Alliance  
Children's Defense Fund  
Children's Dental Health Project  
Children's Leadership Council  
Citizens for Tax Justice  
Clinical Social Work Association  
Coalition for Health Funding  
Coalition on Human Needs  
Commission on Adult Basic Education (COABE)  
Committee for Education Funding  
Common Cause  
Communications Workers of America (CWA)  
Community Access National Network (CANN)  
Community Action Partnership  
Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA)  
Concerned Black Men National  
Conservation Legacy  
Corporation for Enterprise Development (CFED)  
Corporation for Supportive Housing  
CoSN - the Consortium for School Networking  
Council for Exceptional Children  
Council for Opportunity in Education  
Council of Administrators of Special Education, Inc.  
Council of the Great City Schools  
CREDO

Criminalization of Poverty Project at the Institute for Policy Studies  
Defenders of Wildlife  
Democracy 21  
Demos  
Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO  
Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund  
Disciples Justice Action Network  
Easter Seals  
Ecumenical Poverty Initiative  
Every Child Matters  
FamiliesUSA  
Farmworker Justice  
Feeding America  
First Focus Campaign for Children  
Food & Water Watch  
Food Research & Action Center (FRAC)  
Foster Family-based Treatment Association  
Franciscan Action Network  
Friends Committee on National Legislation  
Friends of the Earth  
Futures Without Violence  
Gamaliel  
Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC)  
Generations United  
Global Justice Institute  
Health GAP (Global Access Project)  
Higher Education Consortium for Special Education  
Housing Works  
Interfaith Worker Justice  
International Association of Fire Fighters  
International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers  
International Brotherhood of Boilermakers  
International Brotherhood of Teamsters  
International Federation of Professional & Technical Engineers (IFPTE), AFL-CIO  
International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE)  
Jewish Council for Public Affairs  
Jobs With Justice  
Justice in Aging  
LeadingAge  
League of Conservation Voters  
League of United Latin American Citizens  
League of Women Voters of the United States  
Learning Disabilities Association of America  
Main Street Alliance  
Medical Mission Sisters, North America  
Medicare Rights Center  
Mental Health America  
Metropolitan Community Churches  
MomsRising

NAACP  
NASTAD (National Alliance of State & Territorial AIDS Directors)  
National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys  
National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association (NARFE)  
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd  
National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity (NAPE)  
National Alliance of HUD Tenants  
National Alliance to End Sexual Violence  
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health  
National Association for College Admission Counseling  
National Association for Hispanic Elderly  
National Association for Music Education  
National Association for the Education of Young Children  
National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a)  
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities  
National Association of County and City Health Officials  
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors  
National Association of Elementary School Principals  
National Association of Federally Impacted Schools  
National Association of Letter Carriers  
National Association of Private Special Education Centers  
National Association of School Psychologists  
National Association of Secondary School Principals  
National Association of Social Workers (NASW)  
National Association of State Directors of Special Education  
National Association of State Head Injury Administrators  
National Black Justice Coalition  
National Center for Law and Economic Justice  
National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence  
National Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development (National CAPACD)  
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare  
National Community Development Association  
National Congress of American Indians  
National Council for Behavioral Health  
National Council for Community and Education Partnerships  
National Council of Asian Pacific Americans  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Council of La Raza (NCLR)  
National Council on Independent Living  
National Disability Institute  
National Disability Rights Network  
National Domestic Violence Hotline  
National Down Syndrome Congress  
National Education Association (NEA)  
National Employment Law Project  
National Fair Housing Alliance  
National Federation of Federal Employees  
National Health Care for the Homeless Council

National Hispanic Medical Association  
National Housing Law Project  
National Housing Trust  
National Immigration Law Center  
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health  
National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund  
National Low Income Housing Coalition  
National Network to End Domestic Violence  
National Organization for Women  
National Partnership for Women & Families  
National People's Action  
National Priorities Project  
National PTA  
National Recreation and Park Association  
National Respite Coalition  
National Rural Education Advocacy Coalition  
National Rural Education Association  
National School Boards Association  
National Skills Coalition  
National Superintendents Roundtable  
National Treasury Employees Union  
NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE  
National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable  
National WIC Association  
National Women's Health Network  
National Women's Law Center  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
NDD United  
Network for Environmental & Economic Responsibility of United Church of Christ  
NETWORK: A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby  
Not Dead Yet  
OWL-The Voice of Women 40+  
PAI  
Paralyzed Veterans of America  
Partnership for America's Children  
People for the American Way  
PICO National Network  
Planned Parenthood Federation of America  
Prevention Institute  
Professional Aviation Safety Specialists (PASS)  
Progressive Congress  
Project Inform  
ProLiteracy  
Protect All Children's Environment  
Public Advocacy for Kids  
Public Citizen  
Public Health Institute  
Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities Coalition  
RESULTS

Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law  
School Social Work Association of America  
School-Based Health Alliance  
Senior Executives Association (SEA)  
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)  
Share Our Strength  
Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Congregational Leadership  
Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Western Province Leadership  
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)  
Special Needs Alliance  
State Innovation Exchange (SiX)  
Stewards of Affordable Housing for the Future  
Susan G. Komen  
TESOL International Association  
The AIDS Institute  
The Arc  
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights  
The National Coalition for Literacy  
The National Crittenton Foundation  
The Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, Institute Justice Team  
The United Methodist Church – General Board of Church and Society  
Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO  
Treatment Action Group (TAG)  
Tremor Action Network  
Trust for America's Health (TFAH)  
UNCF  
Union for Reform Judaism  
United Auto Workers (UAW)  
United Cerebral Palsy  
United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries  
United Spinal Association  
United States Student Association (USSA)  
United Steelworkers (USW)  
USAction  
Voices for Progress  
Women's Institute for a Secure Retirement (WISER)  
Young Invincibles  
YouthBuild USA  
ZERO TO THREE