

Federal Budget Sign-on Letter

The Honorable [name]
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear [Senator's Name]:

We write to express our deep concern about the impact of President Bush's proposed budget on the people of Minnesota, and to urge you to do all you can to ensure that the budget ultimately approved by Congress does not cause severe, long-term harm to Minnesota's communities and to the children, elderly, veterans, families, and businesses of our state.

If Congress adopts these cuts, everyone in Minnesota will be affected. The impact of the President's budget would be wide reaching, and do real damage to Minnesota's quality of life. As just one example, Minnesota has been a leader in providing health care for all its citizens, boasting one of the lowest rates of uninsured in the nation. Medicaid provides health care to 366,000 seniors, people with disabilities, children, pregnant women, and others in Minnesota. Recently, state budget deficits have led to severe cutbacks, making health care inaccessible for many people, and shifting costs to other parts of the health care system. Governor Pawlenty's proposed budget would cause many more to lose health care coverage. The President's proposed \$45 billion cut in Medicaid further threatens the viability of Minnesota's health care system.

Minnesotans are all too familiar with the severe pain that is caused when deficits are not addressed through a balanced approach. In 2002, 2003, and 2004, Minnesota's state decision-makers chose to close budget deficits primarily through service cuts, drawing down reserves, and budget gimmicks. As a result, Minnesotans are struggling to cope with the impact of serious reductions in vital services as well as steeply higher fees and copayments in areas such as health care, child care, and higher education.

The federal government is an important source of revenues for state and local governments in Minnesota. Minnesota's state and local governments have struggled to balance their budgets over the past several years, and have made cuts in all areas under their jurisdiction, in services as diverse as parks, libraries, public safety, and after-school programs for at-risk youth. The President's budget calls for a cap on federal discretionary funding, which would result in a loss of \$996 million to Minnesota's state and local governments from 2006 to 2010. Other programs that would be harmed by the discretionary cap include special education, vocational and adult education, and WIC. The quality of life for everyone would decline because of these cuts and from weaker environmental and law enforcement protections. We cannot sustain the additional budget pressures that would result from the federal government stepping back from its commitments.

The people of Minnesota are looking to you to set better priorities and make better choices for our state. We need you to look beyond short-term solutions and plan for the future by making strategic investments that support Minnesota families and the communities we live in. Don't cut health care and education for our children in order to spend more on costly tax cuts that mainly help special interests and the wealthy. Don't cut benefits for veterans when so many have given so much to our country. Don't cut investments that we need to build our local communities and

help people get good jobs. These programs didn't cause the federal budget deficit and shouldn't bear the brunt of deficit reduction.

Further, we ask you to oppose ill-conceived budget schemes such as block grants, entitlement caps, or global spending caps that will force significant cuts in critical services now and for many years in the future.

Minnesotans care about our state and all the things that make it a great place to live, raise a family, and do business. We have tried in this letter to draw attention to some of the specific services that would be cut, but there are many more than can be described in this limited space. Please help make sure that Congress writes a fair and balanced budget that shares the burden and considers the impact of its decisions. If we can be of assistance in providing you additional information on our concerns regarding Congress's budget deliberations, please contact Nan Madden of the Minnesota Budget Project at (651) 642-1904 ext. 230.

To sign on to this letter, please fill in the information below and return no later than 12:00 noon, Wednesday, March 2, to:

Nan Madden at nan@mncn.org or fax: 651-642-1517. We will send it to Senator Coleman and Senator Dayton on the morning of March 3, and release it to the press.

Organization Name (as you want it to appear on the letter):

Organization address: _____
Organization city/state/zip: _____
Contact person name: _____
Contact person title: _____
Contact person email: _____

Please also consider using this letter as an example to write a letter on your organization's letterhead describing how the programs and people you serve would be affected by federal budget cuts. **Send your letter by fax no later than Thursday, March 3 to:**

Senator Norm Coleman
202-224-1152 (fax)

Senator Mark Dayton
202-228-2186 (fax)