

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

WASHINGTON, DC 20515

March 16, 2011

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Chairman
Committee on the Budget
207 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

As required by Section 301(d) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 (P.L. 93-344) and in response to your letter of February 18, 2011, this letter transmits the Views and Estimates of the Committee on Ways and Means on those aspects of the Federal budget for the fiscal year 2012 that fall within the Committee's jurisdiction.

The current pace of the economic recovery is insufficient and far too many Americans remain unemployed. As such, the Committee's overarching focus will be to promote policies that spur private sector job creation and economic growth. These policies include reforming the tax code to make American employers more competitive, expanding trade especially through providing new opportunities to grow exports of American made goods and services and by reducing the burden placed on American employers by the recent rapid growth in budget deficits, reducing the national debt, and eliminating inefficient and counter-productive government regulation.

I. Legislative Issues with Budgetary Impact

A. Human Resources – The Committee will work to help more unemployed Americans find jobs, including by reviewing the operation of current State and Federal unemployment benefits and programs and developing improvements as needed. In addition, the Committee will review how improvements to information systems could improve customer service, as well as the operation of several programs under its jurisdiction whose authorization expires at the end of FY 2011. These include the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Child Care and Development Block Grants created in the 1996 welfare reform law, as well as the Promoting Safe and Stable Families and Child Welfare Services and related programs. The Committee will also continue its general oversight over the Human Resources programs under its jurisdiction, including reviewing benefits provided under multiple programs that may merit consolidation.

B. Medicare and Other Health Care Issues – The Committee will closely oversee the implementation of the new health care overhaul and its impact on federal spending,

the economy, those who are currently insured, Medicare beneficiaries, and health care providers. In addition, the Committee will look for ways to reform the Medicare program to ensure its sustainability for current and future beneficiaries. The Committee will also examine policies that reduce the cost of health insurance, increase health care quality and improve outcomes, encourage transparency, and eliminate waste, fraud, and abuse.

- C. Social Security – The Committee will address the financial challenges facing Social Security, as well as the program’s role in providing economic security for our nation’s retirees, survivors, individuals with disabilities, and their families. The Committee will conduct strong oversight of the SSA’s efforts to increase efficiency and productivity, which are essential given the combination of growing retirement workloads, sustained unemployment, and limited funding. It will continue to monitor backlogs and applicant waiting times for decisions on disability claims and appeals, as well as other service delivery challenges and their impact on workers and beneficiaries.

Assessing program effectiveness, reducing waste, fraud, and abuse, preventing overpayments and ensuring only those who are disabled continue to receive benefits will be a continued focus of the Committee. The Committee will also monitor the impact of the SSA’s role in work authorization enforcement, examine ways to enhance the protection of Social Security numbers, and review options to strengthen Social Security’s disability and return to work programs.

- D. Tax – The Committee recognizes that a complex, burdensome, anti-growth tax code is an obstacle to economic recovery and job creation. Accordingly, a primary focus of the Committee’s tax agenda will be on efforts to simplify and reform the tax code for individuals, families, and employers, with the express purpose of spurring the robust job creation and economic growth necessary to reduce the stubbornly high unemployment rate. In addition, the Committee will consider appropriate tax relief measures for individual taxpayers, families, and employers, while also closely scrutinizing the revenue recommendations contained in the President’s Fiscal Year 2012 Budget.
- E. Trade – The Committee seeks to increase economic opportunities for American workers and businesses through the expansion of trade opportunities, adherence to trade agreements and rules by our trading partners and by the United States, and the elimination of foreign trade barriers to our goods and services by opening new markets and by enforcing U.S. rights. The Committee intends to consider three signed and pending trade agreements – with Colombia, Panama, and South Korea – by July 1, 2011. The Committee will continue its oversight of systemic problems in U.S.-China trade relations, including issues related to China’s consistent lack of protection and enforcement of U.S. intellectual property rights, indigenous innovation requirements, use of industrial subsidies, export restraints on key products such as rare earth minerals, and currency undervaluation. The Committee expects to continue its oversight responsibilities with respect to the World Trade Organization negotiations

and accessions, as well as new bilateral and regional trade agreements such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership. The Committee will continue to be active in overseeing the budgets and activities of agencies within its jurisdiction, as well as the operation of trade preference programs and the Trade Adjustment Assistance programs. The Committee will continue work concerning noncontroversial bills to eliminate or reduce duties on products not made in sufficient quantities in the United States, in accordance with Committee guidelines and House Rules.

II. The Fiscal Year 2012 Budget

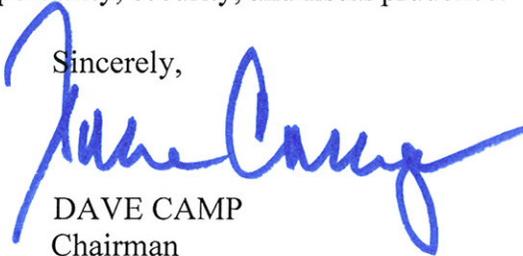
The Committee is reviewing the President's Fiscal Year 2012 Budget. This review will provide the Committee the opportunity to assess the effectiveness of the President's budget in promoting job creation and economic growth, reduce budget deficits and debt, and ensure the long term sustainability of programs within the Committee's jurisdiction.

III. Public Debt Limit

The current statutory public debt limit already is nearly equal to the gross domestic product of the United States. While the Committee recognizes its responsibility to ensure that the United States meets all its obligations, the current growth of the national debt is not sustainable. Current debt levels are already a threat to economic growth and unless action is taken, the projected increase in the national debt will threaten the economic foundation of the country. Thus the Committee intends to pursue policies to slow and ultimately reverse the growth in the national debt and prevent the need for future increases in the statutory debt limit.

The Committee on Ways and Means looks forward to working with the Committee on the Budget as we promote prosperity, opportunity, security, and fiscal prudence.

Sincerely,



DAVE CAMP
Chairman