



## COALITION ON HUMAN NEEDS

1120 Connecticut Avenue, NW · Suite 312 · Washington, DC 20036 · 202.223.2532 · Fax 202.223.2538 · [www.chn.org](http://www.chn.org)

June 3, 2011

The Honorable Lamar S. Smith, Chairman  
House Committee on the Judiciary  
2138 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Conyers, Jr.  
Ranking Minority Member  
House Committee on the Judiciary  
2138 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Smith and Ranking Minority Member Conyers:

On behalf of the Coalition on Human Needs, I am writing to urge your opposition to H.J.Res. 1, the balanced budget constitutional amendment introduced by Rep. Goodlatte that is now under consideration by the Committee on the Judiciary.

The Coalition on Human Needs is an alliance including service providers, faith groups, civil rights organizations, labor, policy experts, and other advocates concerned about the improving federal effectiveness in meeting the needs of low-income and vulnerable people. We have been a lead group in the SAVE for All campaign (Strengthening America's Values and Economy for All), which includes more than 1,600 local, state, and national organizations who have signed a [Statement of Principles](#) around federal budget and deficit reduction policies. Those principles explicitly oppose constitutional amendments to balance the federal budget. In explaining our strong objection to such an approach, the Principles state:

We agree that the long-term federal deficit must be addressed. We believe the nation can and should reduce the deficit over time through a balanced approach that includes equitable increases in revenue and thoughtful reductions in expenditures that do not serve the public interest, including wasteful military spending that does not add to our security. In short, Congress should focus on the policies that will hasten the economic recovery and build a strong foundation for our shared future. This responsible approach will place the nation on firm fiscal footing for economic expansion that benefits everyone.

If Congress tries to reduce the deficit primarily by slashing funding indiscriminately and reducing the scope of critical federal programs, it will weaken us as a nation by

threatening the health and development of millions of low-income children, risking harm to seniors and people with disabilities, and reducing the incomes of many millions of families. The result will leave us more economically insecure. The federal government would stand by helplessly as family incomes erode further, and poverty and inequality rise even beyond today's unacceptably high levels. Instead, the federal government must be an engine for shared prosperity.

H.J.Res. 1 exemplifies the kind of deficit reduction strategy that we believe would seriously weaken our nation. It is not a balanced approach; it would set a nearly insurmountable bar to increase revenues while forcing spending below responsible levels. Amendments in Committee have so far even further reduced spending (to 18 percent of GDP) – truly extreme and well below levels in the Reagan years, grossly inadequate to respond to the needs of an aging population and to increased homeland security threats. You should reject this self-inflicted wound that would impair federal strength and capacity to meet need.

Increasing concern that our economy is faltering should be a reminder that weakening the federal government's capacity to spur economic growth is a dangerous course. Less education, health care, nutrition, and other services leave our families unprepared to participate in today's economy, much less the economy of the future. Rigid constraints on federal action will cost jobs and weaken economic growth as well as cause direct harm to our most vulnerable people, young and old alike. A constructive approach to deficit reduction would protect low-income people from harm. This amendment instead would lead inevitably to hardship and loss for the most vulnerable.

Thank you for considering our strong objections to H.J.Res. 1 and any constitutional amendments to balance the budget. We urge you to reject this approach.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Deborah Weinstein", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Deborah Weinstein  
Executive Director,  
Coalition on Human Needs