



A REVIEW OF NEWSPAPER EDITORIALS OPPOSING BUSH BUDGET PLANS

PREPARED BY: DEMOCRATIC STAFF, SENATE BUDGET COMMITTEE

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American Newspapers Critical of Bush Budget - Many Worry About Deficits & Debt -

A Senate Budget Committee review of newspaper editorials from around the country found many critical of the President's proposed budget. Comments ranged from skepticism of the President's plan to outright hostility toward the President's priorities.

Concern over record budget deficits and growing debt and the lack of a plan to change the fiscal outlook were common concerns expressed by many of the editorials. Some strongly criticized the fiscal irresponsibility of the Bush administration.

Several also stated that the President's forecasts of lower deficits in the future could not be trusted. The editorials faulted the administration for leaving out war costs and the expense of fixing the alternative minimum tax – two costs the newspapers argued would drive up the deficit in later years.

The President's push for additional tax cuts, particularly those cuts that disproportionately benefit the wealthy, were often juxtaposed against the President's spending cuts that disproportionately target the poor. Some newspapers framed the debate in moral tones, noting it was morally unwise to take from the poor to give to the rich.

In total, this document includes excerpts from 58 editorials from 32 states and the District of Columbia. This is not intended to be an all-inclusive list, as these editorials represent only those that have come to the attention of the Committee.

NATIONAL

USA Today: "Who's spending big now? The 'party of small government'" February 21, 2006

"In early 2001, when the federal government was running a surplus, a case could be made for a modest tax cut. But Bush and Congress went overboard, slashing taxes by an announced \$1.35 trillion over 10 years but with gimmicks likely to push the actual cost well beyond \$2 trillion. Then came 9/11, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and Hurricane Katrina, all put on the federal charge card. The surplus was wiped out and replaced with record deficits.

"The first law of holes is that when you're in one, stop digging. So the fiscally responsible policy would be to roll back some of the tax cuts, particularly those for the wealthiest Americans, or let them expire. But no. Bush and congressional Republicans won't hear of it.

"Tax cuts, they say, force hard decisions and restrain reckless spending. The last time we looked, though, Republicans controlled both Congress and the White House. They are the spenders. In fact, since they took control in 2001, they've increased spending by an average of nearly 7.5% a year, more than double the rate in the last five years of Clinton-era budgets.

"The irony is that their irresponsibility eventually will force tax increases. In the end, debts have to be paid — but only after the current crew no longer has to worry about getting elected."

National Catholic Reporter: "By this budget, we've lost our way" February 17, 2006

"But what has become cliché during five years of the Bush administration is now glaringly apparent in the easily discerned outlines of its proposed 2007 budget: Cuts in vital programs that benefit the poor and middle class, continuing tax relief for the very wealthy and substantial increases for defense and Homeland Security.

"If budgets are, as some contend and we would agree, moral documents, then this one suggests we have abandoned a basic sense of right and wrong and any notion that we are at our best when we strive to make life better for all, not just those who manage to accumulate wealth."

CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles Times: "Budget Busters" February 8, 2006

"A nation at war must make difficult choices and endure sacrifice. The soldiers who risk life and limb in Iraq carry the most obvious burden. But those in government must also do their part, by selecting wisely where to direct taxpayer money.

“At a time of belt-tightening throughout the federal government, including Medicare and several programs aimed at helping the poor, there is one corner of Washington where hard choices remain unknown: the Pentagon. The shocker in the \$2.77-trillion budget proposed Monday by President Bush is that not one big-ticket Pentagon weapons program fell under the same knife that seems to be cutting the rest of us.

“War requires courage, both on the battlefield and at home. By declaring 16% of the federal budget essentially off-limits, and by spending scores of billions on programs even the military suspects are wasteful, the president is showing a failure of nerve.”

Sacramento Bee: “Budget Sleight of hand” February 13, 2006

“Bush is asking Congress to make his record-high tax cuts from 2001 and 2003 permanent, at a cost of \$178 billion over the next five years. Add on Bush's proposed new tax breaks and the five-year cost would come to nearly \$300 billion.

“Budget surpluses are no more. This president ticks up record-high deficits and mounting debt. The result: Ever larger chunks of the nation's budget go to paying interest on the debt.

“The Bush administration projects that for the 2007 budget year interest payments on the debt will be \$247.3 billion, making this the nation's third largest expense, behind Social Security and military spending. That's up from \$152.6 billion this year.

“Transportation, education, job training, health, energy, parks, science, international affairs all take a hit when we have to make ever increasing payments on the debt.

“Bush's budget is beyond fantasy. It's a sham.”

San Francisco Chronicle: “Bush's broken budget arrives” February 8, 2006

“Don't say you weren't warned. A doctrinaire president has produced a predictable budget. It's true to form: built on tax cuts, saddled by a costly war and dismissive of the social safety net.”

San Jose Mercury News: “Tax cuts leave U.S. priorities in jeopardy” February 12, 2006

“As in previous budgets, Bush is pushing massive tax cuts, which the nation can ill afford and which will disproportionately benefit wealthy Americans. As in previous budgets, he is targeting for cuts programs that benefit poor and middle-class families. And as in previous budgets, he relies on smoke and mirrors to hide the magnitude of the deficit he would pass on to future generations of Americans.

"If a president's budget is a statement of his priorities, Bush's priorities are wrong for America."

COLORADO

Denver Post: "Bush's 'pittance' for widows, widowers" February 10, 2006

"Besides reviving the discredited privatization notion, the Bush budget calls for saving a total of \$3.4 billion over 10 years by eliminating the token \$255 lump-sum death benefit that has been part of Social Security since its enactment in 1935. Now, isn't that precious? - a sideswipe at Social Security that only hurts widows and widowers.

"What about orphans? The president also would cut off monthly survivor benefits to 16- and 17-year-olds who drop out of high school - social engineering at its most outlandish."

Rocky Mountain News: "Bush budget the ultimate rosy scenario" February 8, 2006

"The federal budget is necessarily based on a series of economic assumptions, and one of them is that nothing bad will happen.

"If President Bush's fiscal 2007 budget assumptions are right, we're in for pretty easy sailing, at least as far as the economy goes. Economic growth will be above 3 percent through 2011. The unemployment rate will be a steady and acceptable 5 percent. Inflation will average 2.5 percent. And interest rates will also be flat, with the interest rate on a 10-year Treasury note getting no higher than 5.6 percent between now and 2011. A deficit cut in half by 2009.

"In contrast to some states, the federal government has no rainy-day fund - yet wars, natural disaster and recessions are paid for out of pocket, typically with emergency spending bills.

"The Bush administration has nothing in its new budget specifically for the costs of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, or Hurricane Katrina. But budget officials say they expect to be asking Congress down the road for \$50 billion for the former and \$18 billion for the latter.

"Given these rosy assumptions and uncounted costs, you might ask how the public can trust the government's deficit projections. And the answer of course is that it can't."

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

The Washington Post: "The Window Opens" February 12, 2006

"In its latest budget, the administration once again minimizes the size of the deficit hole it is digging by excluding sure costs -- fighting the war in Iraq, fixing the alternative minimum tax -- from its budget estimates for future years. It once again asks Congress to change the budget rules in a way that would magically erase from the books the costs of extending the president's tax cuts. There you have it: If it doesn't cost anything, why not do it?"

FLORIDA

Miami Herald: "Treading water in a sea of red ink" February 12, 2006

"The budget makes a weak gesture in the direction of 'deficit reduction,' but once again the numbers don't add up. The problem of runaway spending coupled with the lack of revenue is much bigger than the meager cutbacks that Mr. Bush envisions. Consider the reduction in projected Medicare spending by \$36 billion over five years.

"That's going to hurt the nation's senior citizens and families who cannot afford medical care, a community well represented in South Florida. It seems like a cruel hoax to suggest that this \$36 billion will make a big difference when the Congressional Budget Office predicts that deficits for the five years starting Oct. 1, 2006, will amount to more than \$2.2 trillion.

"The proposed 'savings' in Medicare expenditures amount to roughly 1.6 percent of the total deficit for the five-year period through fiscal year 2011. How about a deficit reduction plan that actually reduces the deficit?"

St. Petersburg Times: "The Bush budget" February 12, 2006

"If a couple seeking a loan submitted a household budget that looked like the one President Bush unveiled last week, they would be laughed out of the bank. America faces a growing deficit that will take more and more of our revenue to repay. So when Bush claims his \$2.8-trillion budget is tough on spending, he can't be taken seriously.

"Many of Bush's spending cuts will make little difference on the bottom line but a great difference in individual lives. By reducing or even eliminating programs for the poor and elderly, he would hurt vulnerable Americans. Ultimately, any real spending reform will have to take on entitlements: Medicare and Social Security.

“...most notable in this budget is its deception. Here is what Bush left out of the expense side: substantial costs of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and a permanent fix for the alternative minimum tax, which has failed its purpose by strapping more moderate-income families with higher taxes. And he is not being honest about the negative implications of his budget on future deficits.”

GEORGIA

Atlanta Journal-Constitution: “No rescue from fiscal quicksand” February 12, 2006

“Under the president's \$2.77 trillion budget for fiscal 2007, federal expenditures would exceed revenue by \$354 billion --- a figure that includes \$50 billion in costs for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan --- and leave unbroken the string of big budget deficits during the Bush administration, a troubling feat this deep into an economic expansion.

“The red ink will push total federal debt to almost \$9.3 trillion, increase the drag of interest payments and make it even more difficult to address long-term fiscal problems. Inevitably, the Bush policies will force consumer interest rates higher, putting home ownership out of the reach of many citizens.

“His budget simply extends the fiction that spending on social services can be reduced while tax breaks cannot, leaving the coming crisis for someone else to deal with.

“That ‘someone else’ is the younger generations of Americans who will have to pay the bill for the current foolhardy fiscal policies.”

HAWAII

The Honolulu Advertiser: “Soaring war costs hurt poor and needy” February 5, 2006

“Here's one of the unexpected casualties of the Iraq war: the poor and elderly who depend on government services.

“And it will get worse if Congress later passes Bush's plan to make permanent tax cuts that favor the wealthy. If that happens and the cost of war continues to rise, most assuredly, more pain is ahead.”

ILLINOIS

Chicago Tribune: "A hide-and-peek budget" February 11, 2006

"This budget has a lot of questions, a lot of holes.

"For starters, the budget document gives an unsatisfying and incomplete picture of the nation's fiscal picture for 2007. It includes revenues from items Congress repeatedly has refused to approve (such as drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge) and leaves out spending requests (such as for the Iraq war) that are being prepared. All the budget numbers should be considered squishy until proven otherwise.

"The president seeks nearly a 7 percent increase in defense spending and 3.3 percent more for spending on homeland security. But there will be more to come. The administration last week said it's going to ask Congress for an additional \$120 billion to cover the Iraq and Afghanistan military efforts through the early part of 2007 and another \$18 billion for hurricane relief.

"Even more money for Iraq, Afghanistan and hurricane relief in 2007 almost certainly will be requested.

"The president seeks to cut all other discretionary domestic spending by one-half of 1 percent. Restraint, yes it is. But that discretionary spending, ranging from food stamps to education to disease control, accounts for just \$1 out of every \$6 spent by the federal government."

INDIANA

Fort Wayne Journal-Gazette: "Continuing deficits spell uncertain future" January 31, 2006

"President Bush likely would prefer not to dwell on the fact, but new congressional estimates show that one of his administration's legacies will be a running federal budget deficit.

"Bush and the GOP Congress have begun talking a tough game on budget deficits, but that will require really hard choices on tax cuts and spending. Both will have to be reduced and in ways that may not be politically popular.

"The longer those choices are put off, the tougher they'll be when they absolutely must be made."

Fort Wayne News Sentinel: “Mr. Bush, govern lightly” February 1, 2006

“Americans can be grateful that the reality of rising deficits and mounting debt has caught up with President Bush.

“The national debt is still \$8 trillion. Yearly deficits in the federal budget are still around \$400 billion. And in his State of the Union address Tuesday night, the president proposed no reckless new plans to further indebt the nation.”

IOWA

Des Moines Register: “Try truth straight up, no spin” February 2, 2006

“On the budget, the president trotted out a claim he often makes: that the deficit will be cut in half by 2009. Saying something will be cut in half implies that it will keep falling to zero, but that's not the case with the deficit. Using the "cut in half" benchmark is disingenuous.

“It's even doubtful the deficit will be cut in half because the claim is based on dubious assumptions about Congress controlling spending. But even if the deficit does fall by half, long-term projections show the deficit rising again after being cut in half. The fact is, the president's tax cuts have given the nation a permanent, structural deficit.”

KENTUCKY

The Courier-Journal (Louisville): “Aiming at the poor” February 19, 2006

“But what does it say about the value system of an administration that it places greater priority on tax reductions whose benefits fall overwhelmingly to the very richest Americans than on defibrillators in rural areas or centers for traumatic brain injuries?”

“If Congress goes along, programs helping less privileged Americans will be lost or weakened. And there may not really be savings. Women who don't receive child support, for instance, often wind up on welfare. Similarly, it is far costlier to treat advanced heart or Alzheimer's disease than to provide early detection and education.

“On the other hand, Congress may refuse to go along. But if that is the extent of their recalcitrance if they nevertheless extend tax cuts and agree to the “President's requests for supplemental appropriations for Iraq and Afghanistan the deficit and national debt will continue to soar. And some domestic programs will inevitably be pointlessly harmed later.

“There is, of course, a third option:

“Restore fiscal sanity by funding health care, social services and national security needs with revenue gained by repealing tax cuts or allowing them to expire.”

MAINE

Portland Press Herald: “Untamed deficit menaces our kids; Budgetary sleight of hand hides true scope of problem” January 30, 2006

“...[T]he budgetary estimates practiced by the administration significantly underestimate the problem by ignoring some serious and entirely foreseeable fiscal impacts that are just over the horizon.

“...[T]he deficit fails to account for the future cost of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

“It doesn't address looming shortfalls in Medicaid and Medicare that will strain the federal budget in the next decade. And it doesn't consider the cost of a reform of the increasingly burdensome alternative minimum tax, which could cost \$1 trillion over 10 years..

“Even with an assumed phase-down of Iraq troop strength and an extension of tax cuts currently scheduled to expire, the deficit would dip no lower than \$222 billion. And who knows what natural disaster, foreign intervention or other unforeseen event will happen between now and then?

“How many generations of our children will be asked to pay for the tax cuts of today?”

MARYLAND

Baltimore Sun: “No heavy lifting” February 9, 2006

“In a trend that must be confusing to many Americans, the president's budget proposal is increasingly detached from the reality of what the federal government actually spends.

“He didn't deal with the true cost of his tax cuts; he couldn't bring himself to scrap outmoded weapons systems; expenses for the Iraq war are off the books. Mr. Bush took a few useful stabs at Medicare, but punted to a bipartisan commission the task of applying restraints to federal health and retirement programs that are exploding exponentially.

“Meanwhile, interest on the national debt nearly equals annual spending on Medicaid and isn't far behind the amount spent on all nondefense agencies combined.

“The fiscal theory in vogue is that it's possible to spend more and cut taxes, too. But a whopping big bill is already coming due.”

MASSACHUSETTS

The Berkshire Eagle (Pittsfield): “The truth about Bush's budget” February 8, 2006

“...the former ‘compassionate conservative’ wants to cut billions from -- Medicare spending for the states, influenza-preparedness programs, arts and technology classes in the schools, grant funding for college students, affordable housing, home heating oil subsidies and home insulation subsidies for the poor -- to cite just a few examples. Massachusetts schools and hospitals, already struggling economically, would be hit hard by these cuts.

“The cost of many of these programs would be matched by the money lost to tax breaks for the top 1 percent of U.S. households. The president, however, is committed to rewarding his wealthy constituency, even if it is done at the cost of children, the elderly and the poor.”

Boston Globe: “House of Cards Budget” February 7, 2006

“To offset the extended tax cuts and hike in military spending, Bush wants to cut outright or slow the growth in a wide range of domestic programs. Hospitals and other healthcare providers would see a decrease of \$36 billion over five years in federal outlays for Medicare. Community development block grants could be reduced by one-third from fiscal 2005 levels. Massachusetts, a center of medical research, would be hit particularly by a Bush proposal essentially to freeze spending for the National Institutes of Health, which had been getting substantial annual increases.

“Other programs that would suffer heavy cuts include community policing and education funds for vocational training, arts, parent-resource centers, and drug-free schools. The United States, the richest country in the world, could afford all these initiatives, pay hospitals and doctors adequately to treat elders, and maintain the NIH's commitment to medical science if Congress would declare an end to the tax giveaways of the past five years, especially to the wealthiest households. The administration's addiction to tax cuts is as harmful to the nation as the addiction to oil the president owned up to last week.”

MICHIGAN

Detroit Free Press: “Term 2, Year 2; With fresh agenda, Bush tries to regain momentum”
February 1, 2006

“The president appears sensitive to rising national concern about the cost of health care...but he did not propose overhauling the system. The cornerstone of the president's health care plan is, instead, expanded use of health savings accounts in which people set aside money tax free for health care needs....As the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities put it, this is a fine idea for the "healthy, wealthy and wise" but won't do much for the low-income folks who have no health care coverage to start.

“And if the implementation of the new Medicare prescription benefit is any indication of how the government intends to improve the health care bureaucracy, the best advice is to just stay healthy.”

MINNESOTA

Star Tribune (Minneapolis): “A budget that doesn't add up; Congress' true fiscal conservatives will need to start over” February 7, 2006

“Just four years ago, Bush sent Congress a budget that promised to balance the federal budget by 2005. Instead the government ran a deficit of \$318 billion last year...

“The budget that Bush sent Congress yesterday continues this pattern of fudging numbers and low-balling forecasts. It says the federal deficit will fall by half, as a share of Gross Domestic Product, by 2009, but obscures the fact that the deficit will start rising again just two years later. It asks for \$50 billion to continue combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, but omits any budgeting for costs after next year. It budgets billions of dollars for new health-related tax breaks, but not a penny to repair the Alternative Minimum Tax, a costly reform that Congress cannot possibly ignore in the next year or two.

“...[T]his president's budget blunders are starting to have real consequences... The federal debt has grown by 50 percent in the last five years, to \$8 trillion...This has created a massive burden for future taxpayers just as baby boomers are about to begin placing new strains on federal retirement programs.

“Meanwhile, to pay for yet another new round of tax cuts, the president would chip away at programs most Americans find highly valuable, such as nutrition assistance to the elderly, rural land conservation, community policing and academic counseling for disadvantaged high school students.”

MISSOURI

Kansas City Star: "Ballooning deficits" February 10, 2006

"Bush has suggested some domestic spending cuts that will need to be considered. But they are more than offset by many other proposals in the same budget. With Medicare, in particular, Bush seems to have one foot on the accelerator and one on the brake.

"As always, Bush wants more tax cuts that would primarily benefit the wealthy. Tax cuts he once hailed as 'just right' now strike him -- despite a much higher federal debt -- as dangerously inadequate.

"In recent decades this newspaper has blasted Republican and Democratic presidents alike for bad budgets. This administration, however, has set new standards for fiscal irresponsibility."

St. Louis Post-Dispatch: "The president already has it on cruise control" February 8, 2006

"But the larger problem is the choices the budget doesn't make. It doesn't choose to roll back the tax cuts that drove a record \$423 billion deficit. It doesn't choose to deal with the Alternative Minimum Tax, which will soon begin wreaking havoc on middle-class taxpayers. It doesn't include long-term money to rebuild New Orleans and the Gulf Coast. It doesn't begin to address the looming crisis that retiring baby boomers will bring to the Social Security system.

"It's a budget long on hazy assumptions and fiscal legerdemain and short on political courage. It leaves the hard choices for Congress and future generations. It disappoints, whether you come at it from the right (huge deficits) or the left (more guns, less butter). Combined with last week's fuzzy State of the Union Address, it speaks of a president who's already got it on cruise control."

NEVADA

Reno Gazette-Journal: "A budget no one wants" February 8, 2006

"But what's remarkable about the president's new budget is that, like so many recent presidential budgets, no one in the capital is taking it seriously.

"Even members of the president's own party -- Sen. Arlen Specter, Sen. Olympia Snowe and others -- already have dismissed much of the budget. Some don't like the cuts (or slowed growth) in programs that benefit their particular constituents -- seniors,

for instance, or farmers or Amtrak commuters, or whoever. Budget hawks, on the other hand, are unhappy that the president still hasn't proposed a budget that comes anywhere near to being balanced -- or vetoed a single bill that spends more than he proposed.

"...[T]he president's \$2.77 trillion budget -- not including the costs of fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq -- only nibbles at the edge of the government.

"It's an appropriate time to take a serious look at major programs to determine whether we're getting our money's worth from them. That's what many voters expected when they elected a Republican president and a Republican Congress. Instead they're getting a rising a deficit and a budget that's dead on arrival."

NEW HAMPSHIRE

New Hampshire Union Leader: "Bush's new budget: We waited five years for this?"
February 8, 2006

"The President frames his 2007 budget as one that starts the process of serious deficit reduction. (That would be the deficit made ridiculously large by Republican profligacy.) Unfortunately, the deficit reduction Bush touts is largely a fiction. His budget does not include spending on Iraq and Afghanistan, and it absurdly assumes that Congress will restrain spending in the next few years.

"Even if a miracle occurs and Bush magically meets his deficit reduction projections by the end of the decade, the deficit will spiral out of control almost immediately after that, as soon as the Baby Boomers start to retire and collect Social Security and Medicaid.

"It is bad enough that Americans had to wait five years before Republicans in Washington began thinking about presenting budgets that looked as if parts of them might have been written by Republicans. Then we finally get one and it takes no real stab at controlling entitlement spending.

"Mr. President, you are not fooling anyone. Stop these short-term political games and give us a budget that brings federal spending down to a sustainable level. Don't let the American people down by passing this problem on to our children."

Telegraph of Nashua: "A few requests for President Bush" February 8, 2006

"The \$2.77 trillion budget you propose for the next fiscal year contains many cuts in domestic programs and is heavy on spending for the military and security. It would also make permanent tax cuts approved in your first term at a cost to the treasury of \$1.4 trillion over 10 years.

"Nevertheless, your administration says the nation is still on course to reduce the deficit in half by 2009. It sounds much too good to be true.

"And while we're at it, some of those cuts, especially in Medicare and Medicaid programs, as well as for education, could impact our state budget severely. Lowering federal responsibilities by hiking state or local budgets is a deceptive way to achieve deficit reduction."

NEW JERSEY

The Record (Bergen County): "The false choice; We don't have to abandon financial future"
February 10, 2006

"President Bush would have Americans believe that the nation faces a choice: Either drastically cut spending for the poor, the elderly and other ordinary Americans or endure mounting budget deficits.

"But that notion is based on the false premise that the current record budget deficits are unavoidable.

"The truth is the deficits are the fault of a president who insists on slashing the taxes of the wealthy at the expense of the nation's most vulnerable citizens and its financial future.

"The most egregious choice is to make Mr. Bush's tax cuts permanent. These cuts are a giveaway to the rich. People earning more than \$1 million get \$136,000 each year. Families in the middle-fifth of household incomes, by contrast, get a paltry \$650.

"The tax cuts don't fuel economic growth nearly as much as they endanger the nation's financial future. Making them permanent would cost \$1.2 trillion over the next 10 years, which leaves virtually nothing for much-needed investments in education, scientific research and other initiatives vital to the nation's future international competitiveness.

"But this president pretends to be fiscally responsible by cutting social spending. This would be funny if his cuts didn't threaten real harm to people."

NEW MEXICO

Albuquerque Tribune: "It is a limp and cowardly plan" February 15, 2006

"The worst part is, while pretending to be fiscally prudent, Bush still wants to make his tax cuts permanent - a measure that will only raise the national debt. If the president were a true fiscal conservative, he wouldn't spend money he doesn't have - on Iraq or anything else - and would not dump on tomorrow's taxpayers his freespending ways.

"If the war is worth fighting, Bush should argue that Americans must pay and new tax cuts can wait. Instead, he requires Americans to sacrifice nothing.

"It would be refreshing to have a president brave enough to ask the adult public - and not Americans being conceived in the womb today - to pay for his agenda. Bush doesn't have the spine for it, but maybe the Congress does."

Las Cruces Sun-News: "Don't hamstring our Guard" March 1, 2006

"Bush's 2007 budget proposal would cut funding for state-controlled National Guard from the 350,000 citizen soldiers now authorized by Congress to about 333,000. It would cut funding for the Army Reserve from the 205,000 troops now authorized by Congress to 188,000.

"While we understand and share the president's desire to trim the federal budget, we think this is the wrong place to look for those cuts, and the wrong time. National Guard troops from states throughout the country are serving critical roles in Iraq, Afghanistan and other foreign nations in the war on terrorism.

"This is already a challenging time for the Guard. Members have been asked to make great sacrifices, and recruiting is difficult. Our nation's leaders in Washington should be doing all they can to help support the Guard, not proposing budget cuts."

NEW YORK

Buffalo News: "Federal budget omits so much" February 9, 2006

"What's not in the proposed federal budget that President Bush sent this week to Congress is as telling as what is. There's no costly fix for the Alternative Minimum Tax, for example. Nor is the \$120 billion supplemental spending for Iraq and Afghanistan included, although it will have to be. And much of the needed repair work on Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid is deferred to bipartisan commissions that are unlikely to get anywhere in a fiercely contested midterm election year.

“This squeezes domestic spending, an unavoidable path for an administration caught between its drive to cut taxes more and its bills for wars, homeland security and hurricane relief. Speaking of which, the Bush budget cuts the Army Corps of Engineers construction budget by 34 percent, months after its levee repair plans went unfinished, leaving New Orleans so vulnerable. Cutting revenues while boosting defense and recovery allocations translates to cuts in 141 federal programs.”

Cornell Daily Sun: “No dollars left behind” February 21, 2006

“The Perkins Loan program is a revolving loan fund -- money received from students making loan payments are loaned out again to new student-borrowers. The Federal government has not added a single dollar to the fund in two fiscal years. Nevertheless, terminating the Perkins Loan program was a measure suggested to reduce the national deficit. According to the Department of Education (DOE), the program was tagged for deletion because it appeared to “duplicate other programs.”

“That's right -- tuition for the neediest students just became harder to fund because the DOE found the methods of assistance 'unoriginal.’

“Under the president's budget proposal, the loan payments made by former students will go to the Treasury, instead of being loaned to new students. This will reduce the deficit by perhaps \$6 billion over the next six years. But we think that, at best, this is a false economy, and, at worst, pure hypocrisy from an administration that claims to be determined to make sure that no child is left behind.”

The New York Times: “A Trillion Little Pieces” February 7, 2006

“President Bush 's \$2.77 trillion budget is fiction masquerading as fact, a governmental version of the made-up memoirs that have been denounced up and down the continent lately. The spending proposal is built around the pretense that the same House and Senate that are set to consider a record deficit of \$423 billion will now impose a virtual freeze on everything other than Pentagon and homeland security outlays. The budget writers even fantasized an end to Social Security's lump-sum death benefit -- a whopping \$255 per recipient -- as if Congress would dare to do something so heartless and easy to exploit in an election year.

“Now, to pay for his top priorities -- the military and tax cuts -- the president is relying on proposed spending cuts. While Congress will never make some of them, it may make others, but only at the peril of the poor and the middle class. Those cuts include basic needs in education, environmental protection, medical research, low-income housing for the elderly and the disabled, community policing, and supplemental food for the needy.

“The president’s plan was, on the whole, depressingly familiar. The administration that produced shattering deficits is at it again. Even the fiction was plagiarized from failed budgets of the past.”

Newsday: “Big budget, small government” February 8, 2006

“The moment of truth is coming for fans of small government. The budget President George W. Bush sent to Congress Monday would cut taxes for the affluent and cut spending for a raft of programs popular in middle America.

“To make room to permanently extend previous, unaffordable tax cuts and to add even more in the guise of health savings accounts, Bush asked lawmakers to freeze or trim spending for such things as education, national parks, housing, hospitals, farmers and environmental protection, and to slow the rate of growth in entitlements such as Medicare.”

Rochester Democrat and Chronicle: “Fiscal mayhem” February 7, 2006

“With ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, along with the war on terrorism, Bush is adding spending to the defense budget. But he’s doing it while putting the squeeze on poor and average Americans. Never mind that more than \$1.4 trillion in his first-term tax cuts would be maintained, including those for the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans.

“Bush’s fiscal policies, which will drive up the federal deficit to an all-time high of \$423 billion, is hardly the way to cultivate the kind of bipartisan cooperation he called for in last week’s State of the Union speech.”

The Times Union (Albany): “Voodoo economics” February 7, 2006

“Ever since he took office, Mr. Bush has touted tax cuts as key to revitalizing the economy. Yet the numbers suggest fiscal peril. The White House expects this year’s deficit will be \$400 billion, up from \$319 billion the year before. The national debt is \$8.18 trillion, and Congress must soon raise the debt ceiling if the government is to keep operating.

“Then there’s the costs of the war in Iraq. Last Thursday, the White House said it will ask Congress for \$70 billion more for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan for the current fiscal year, and \$50 billion more for the first few months of fiscal 2007. Add to this the costs for the first year under the new Medicare drug plan, along with another \$18 billion for cleanup operations in the hurricane-ravaged Gulf Coast, and the prospects for endless red ink become more apparent than ever.

“Prudence would suggest sharp spending cuts across the board. Instead, Mr. Bush wants the investment tax cuts made permanent, and supporters are citing a new Congressional Budget Office report that capital gains tax revenue has risen 45 percent since 2003, to \$539 billion from \$269 billion in 2002, after the gains tax was cut from 20 percent to 15 percent. But how much of that increase was caused by the tax cut, and how much reflects the rise in stock values over that period?”

“Meanwhile, Mr. Bush's 10-year tax cut plan alone, if made permanent, will cost \$1.7 trillion. Another President Bush had an apt description for this kind of budget - voodoo economics.”

NORTH CAROLINA

The Asheville Citizen-Times: “Bush’s budget recklessly speeds nation further down a bad road” February 11, 2006

“‘Scandalous’ and ‘disappointed’ were words used to greet the plan by two Republican senators, Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania and Olympia Snowe of Maine.

“‘Scandalous’ sounds about right. The budget doesn't include spending for the military in Afghanistan and Iraq, or for Hurricane Katrina relief aid. It shows hideous priorities in calling for an elimination of the Social Security death benefit (\$255) and would cut off survivor benefits to high school dropouts aged 16 and 17 -- while eliminating all funds for dropout prevention programs.

“The 2007 budget proposal continues a path of running the nation's finances in reverse. It's a path we can't continue forever, and the time to put the brakes on is now.”

The News & Observer (Raleigh): “Who’s crunched?” February 8, 2006

“Well, at least this can be said of President Bush's budget for the fiscal year of 2007, unveiled Monday: There are no surprises. This president...offers a budget that slams the poor and the middle class. It is a budget that fails to do better by those who cannot do better by themselves.

“If you are poor in America, there's not much hope here that the government will help you improve your lot.

“It's pretty cold outside for the middle class as well. Health-care costs are skyrocketing, but Bush stays true to the insurance and drug companies who supported him knowing he would protect their interests.

“His balm for what ails the middle-class people struggling to afford health insurance? The same-old, same-old rhetoric about tax breaks for health-care savings accounts. Great. A tax break, but by the way, you'll just have to suck it up and put more of your money aside to pay the doctor yourself.”

Winston-Salem Journal: “Needed Budget Hawks” February 12, 2006

“Bush must be kidding when he boasts that he is on schedule to cut the annual federal deficit in half by the time he leaves office in 2009. On the day he took office in 2001, the budget was balanced and America faced the prospect of a \$5.6 trillion surplus over the next decade. Now, after four years of deficits in the record-breaking region of \$400 billion a year, the country is on course to run up another \$2.2 trillion in debt in the next five years. The deficit in this proposed budget is \$423 billion. Those numbers come from the Congressional Budget Office.

“To make things worse, the administration is conning the people. The deficits will really be much higher.

“Parse Bush's promise carefully, too. He says that he will cut the annual deficit to the more than \$200 billion range by 2009. But as soon as he leaves office, his tax cuts, if made permanent, will kick in with huge new reductions in federal collections. The next president, be it John McCain, Hillary Clinton or Bill Frist, will face enormous annual shortfalls.

“It's time for Washington's deficit hawks to come out of hiding and make the president and the Congress understand that America has to pay its bills.”

NORTH DAKOTA

Minot Daily News: “Proposed cuts would be painful” February 27, 2006

“From 2001 to 2005, MSU (Minot State University) received \$38.1 million from federal programs, and MSU received \$9.2 million in federal programs for student aid, grants, contracts and other support in 2005 alone.

“If that funding is reduced, the cuts would be real. Among the items funded at least in part by federal money is the Rural Crime and Justice Center at MSU, which also runs the Rural Meth Education Project. The use of methamphetamine has exploded across the Midwest. The research on the environmental effects of meth labs being done at MSU will be valuable as states struggle to clean up the dangerous messes left at meth lab sites. If the federal money goes away, so does the research.

“...there is much work ahead to reinforce the importance of the targeted programs, both for education officials and our elected lawmakers. It won't be an easy job, but it's a job we know they can handle.”

OHIO

The Columbus Dispatch: “End the hypocrisy: Congress should balance the books with spending cuts or by eliminating Bush's tax cuts” February 12, 2006

“President Bush's budget blueprint is a fiscal fairy tale with an unhappy ending.

“Bush wants a stronger defense, improved homeland security, continuation of a prescription-drug benefit for Medicare recipients and many other federal services. And he wants this to be accompanied by congressional action to make permanent the tax cuts enacted in his first term.

“His \$ 2.77 trillion budget would damage further the nation's financial wellbeing.

“The GOP-controlled Congress needs to face up to reality. Ohio Republican Sen. George V. Voinovich indicated after Bush's Jan. 31 State of the Union speech that he opposes continuing the tax cuts. Will other Republicans in Ohio's congressional delegation join him in his stand for common sense?”

Plain Dealer (Cleveland): “Strange formula” February 14, 2006

“Even as certain areas, such as the physical sciences, would receive an overdue funding increase, Bush's overall spending for science and technology next year remains flat - and is scheduled to shrink substantially in coming years.

“The twin pincers of tax cuts and skyrocketing defense spending leave government with too few resources to invest even in those areas Bush himself says are crucial.

“As Congress considers these proposals in coming months, lawmakers must find ways to add real meaning to the president's promises. The United States absolutely should invest more in physical sciences, but those gains cannot come at the expense of college access or life-saving research.

“Nations throughout the world are starting to outpace us in innovation and long have enjoyed lower labor costs. After all, winning the war on terror is worth little if we lose the battle for economic survival.”

OREGON

The Oregonian (Portland): "Swinging a budget ax at Oregon's timber towns" February 8, 2006

"President Bush's proposed budget hits Oregon where it most hurts: square in its cash-strapped schools and its struggling rural communities.

"The Bush administration's \$2.77 trillion budget plan released Monday includes a plan to cut in half, and ultimately phase out, the program that compensates rural, timber-dependent counties in 39 states for federal timberlands that generate no property taxes.

"Bush's proposal threatens as much as \$279 million a year in federal aid now received by rural Oregon counties and schools. It also promises to rip open old wounds by linking support for rural counties to the sale of public lands and eventually reconnecting federal aid to timber harvest."

PENNSYLVANIA

Intelligencer Journal (Lancaster): "Bashing the budget" February 8, 2006

"George W. Bush delivered yet another disappointing budget to Congress this week. In short, it gives to the military and rich Americans what it takes from senior citizens and future college students. And it fails to address long-term problems with Medicare and taxes that are eating away at what's left of America's middle class.

"Even with the rising cost of defense and security, the biggest problem with the Bush budget is his unwillingness to do away with tax cuts that largely favor those in the upper income brackets. If the tax cuts are made permanent as the president desires, it would reduce federal revenue by \$1.5 trillion over the next decade. At the same time, Bush chose only to place a Band-Aid on the Alternative Minimum Tax rather than completely reform it."

Morning Call (Allentown): "Federal Budget; Let the debate begin: the moral and fiscal impact of the President's fiscal 2007 budget" February 9, 2006

"Given the fiscal challenges, it doesn't make sense for the President to call for making his 2001 and 2003 tax cuts permanent beyond their 2010 expiration. Such a move would cost \$120 billion in 2011 and \$1.2 trillion from 2012-2016. Yes, that's trillion, with a 't.'

“And keep the ‘d’ word in mind, too: deficit. The President inherited three consecutive years of federal surpluses but -- poof!-- they disappeared. Bush administration deficits have totaled \$1.5 trillion in the last four years, and another \$345 billion in red ink is predicted for 2007, even with the proposed spending cuts. Certainly Iraq, the war on terrorism, and hurricane relief in southern states could not have been predicted. But since the Oval Office has never contained a crystal ball, that's all the more reason to not make tax cuts permanent.

“In fact, the federal deficit isn't the only cloud on the horizon. The other ‘d’ word, ‘debt,’ is also of concern. If no major action is taken to alleviate U.S. debt by 2026, David Wyss, chief economist at Standard & Poor's, said, U.S. government bonds would achieve junk-bond status.

“The federal budget must reflect good moral and fiscal choices.”

Philadelphia Inquirer: “Dismantling Social Security; Rejected plan still lives” February 14, 2006

“Unfortunately, the President has not given up on the idea of dismantling Social Security in favor of building an investor-based retirement program with winners and losers. Although he didn't mention it in his speech, Bush did include the costs of creating private stock-market accounts in the new 2007 federal budget that he submitted to Congress within days of his Jan. 31 address to the nation.

“And there is justifiable suspicion that the President, having lost a frontal assault on Social Security, is shifting to an incremental war against the venerable program. Bush also has proposed eliminating Social Security's lump-sum death benefit of \$255, begun in 1939 to cover funeral costs. Although this benefit no longer comes close to paying for burial expenses, eliminating it is an unsympathetic slap at families who have lost a primary wage-earner.”

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette: “Fend for yourselves” February 8, 2006

“President Bush has dropped another limp and cowardly budget on the American public.

“Sure, the \$2.77 trillion plan raises spending for defense, security and the Iraq war. But it continues the cuts in domestic programs that have become the hallmark of the Bush administration and the Republican Congress. In short, he wants to spend more on items that have been manipulated to play on people's fears and less on help to those who are vulnerable, powerless and silent -- a politically easy road to take.

“The worst part is, while pretending to be fiscally prudent, Mr. Bush still wants to make his tax cuts permanent -- a populist measure that will only fuel annual deficits and raise the national debt on America's next generation. If the president were a true fiscal conservative, he would not spend money he doesn't have -- on Iraq or anything else -- and he would not dump on tomorrow's taxpayers the free-spending ways of his administration.”

RHODE ISLAND

Providence Journal: “The Bush budget” February 13, 2006

“There were a few pockets of fiscal bravery in President Bush's proposed budget, but he all too often seemed to push solutions to major problems off to the future. And his commitment to tax cuts remains unwavering, thus limiting solutions to the destabilizing deficit.

“But a disproportionate percentage of Bush's budget comforts the comfortable. For instance, he wants to expand tax-preferred savings devices, such as health savings accounts (discreetly deepening the deficit), and continue hefty tax cuts that mostly benefit the well-off - even as overall inflation-adjusted wages fall.

“How much have the Bush tax cuts expanded the economy? No one really knows, but we do know that the economy was doing well in the '90s, before the cuts were enacted, and the budget was not going into deep deficit. The current yawning deficit will limit the government's ability to respond to future crises, and may ultimately undermine the stability of the dollar - and, indeed, our whole financial system.”

TEXAS

Fort Worth Star-Telegram: “Some plain talk” February 5, 2006

“... it is counterintuitive to think the annual deficit can be halved even as tax cuts are made permanent, especially when the price tag for the nation's ongoing war on terror is approaching a half-trillion dollars.

“What Bush did not mention is that the total national debt now stands at \$8.2 trillion.”

UTAH

The Salt Lake Tribune: “Sale of public lands; We can only hope it is a political stunt”
February 11, 2006

“The Bush administration's proposal to sell off chunks of public lands is a cynical trial balloon raised to give the false impression that the government is serious about reducing the nation's deficit...

“It's logical, if suspicious, to think that the White House assumes Congress will block its plan to raise a paltry \$1 billion by selling hundreds of thousands of acres of land now held by the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management.

“If that's so, then the goal is for the White House to be able to claim that it had an idea for reducing the deficit but that Congress wasn't strong enough to make the hard choices that leadership requires....

“What's frightening, as opposed to merely cynical, is the thought that the administration is serious, that the president really thinks the American people should or would sell large parts of their most cherished legacy just to make a undetectable dent in the national debt.”

VIRGINIA

The Roanoke Times: “Bush's budget skews priorities” February 8, 2006

“Worse than the president's unrealistic assumptions, though, are the very real and very skewed priorities the budget demonstrates.

“To preserve \$1.5 trillion in tax cuts over the next decade, Bush proposes cuts to health care and education that even Republicans called ‘scandalous’ and disappointing.

“At a press briefing on Monday, White House spokesman Scott McClellan repeated the fiction that making Bush's tax cuts permanent “will keep our revenues up.”

“But tax cuts don't pay for themselves.

“No, paying for tax cuts is done by reducing spending. Defense and homeland security are getting increases, leaving the domestic programs that Bush wants to starve anyway.

“Bush's budget proposal is both fiscally and morally irresponsible.”

The Virginian-Pilot (Norfolk): "Budget can't ignore cost of the war" February 13, 2006

"It's not what's in President Bush's most recent budget that gives off a whiff of disingenuousness. It's what isn't.

"Conspicuously absent from the phone-book-sized 2007 spending document is one of this government's most controversial items: the lion's share of funding for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"Odd as that may sound, it's par for the course for this White House, which has yet to budget honestly for the wars. Since the Iraq conflict began in 2003, the Bush administration has consistently excluded those costs from its main budgets.

"Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle are angry at some of the budget's contents, like cuts in social programs, farm payments, and education and health spending.

"But they should direct some of their ire at the whole dishonest process. Paying for the conflict in Iraq has become an exercise almost as empty as the reasons for war itself."

WASHINGTON

The News Tribune (Tacoma): "Bush budget lacks compassion, reality; The administration's \$2.77 trillion spending proposal is an untenable attempt to cling to a policy of tax cuts"
February 8, 2006

"President Bush's guns-over-butter budget makes clear his priorities - and the impossibility of meeting them.

"The \$2.77 trillion blueprint unveiled Monday stays true to the administration's playbook of draining social programs to fund tax cuts and the war on terror."

The Seattle Post-Intelligencer: "Federal budget: Blue-city blues" February 12, 2006

"It's trite to say that President Bush's budget rewards the wealthy with tax cuts while punishing those who most need federal services.

"Trite, but true.

"The president's budget proposes to zero out funds for urban Indian health programs...The administration's plans include elimination of programs that provide food for the elderly.

“This nonsensical federal budget is detrimental to the Northwest in so many other ways. Consider household budgets: The Bonneville Power Administration would pick Northwest electrical ratepayers' pockets to make the overall budget numbers look a little less awful than they actually are.”

WEST VIRGINIA

Charleston Gazette: “GOP values; Money for war, not people” February 13, 2006

“The Bush administration - deeply entwined with the fundamentalist ‘religious right’ - continues to contradict the humane values espoused by Jesus.

“...the White House wants to eliminate the \$107 million Commodity Supplemental Food Program that feeds poor children, low-income mothers and needy oldsters.

“And it wants to wipe out \$630 million in block grants for local programs providing jobs, housing, food and medical care to low-income people.

“It even asks Congress to halt Social Security's lump-sum death benefit - a mere \$255 per deceased person.

“These heartless cuts are requested so the White House can say that federal spending has been reduced, therefore more huge tax giveaways to the wealthy are justified. As we said, the ugly values behind the budget are the opposite of what Jesus stood for, regardless of the president's avowed sanctimony. And they're the opposite of what most Americans consider humane.

“More money for war. More tax giveaways to the wealthy. But less help for American families, children, oldsters, veterans and college students. These Republican values are just plain cruel.”

WISCONSIN

The Capital Times (Madison): “A bad budget for Wisconsin” February 14, 2006

“Budgets are, indeed, statements of values and priorities. And Wisconsinites who would trust the values and priorities of Dave Obey more than they do those of George Bush would be wise to join the congressman from Wausau in challenging this president's deeply flawed proposal.”