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Opening Statement Rep. Elijah E. Cummings, Ranking Member

Reconciliation Instructions for the Republican Budget

April 26, 2012

This is an amendment in the nature of a substitute, and it rejects the premise that we need to take an additional \$80 billion out of the pockets of millions of middle-class American families across the country.

We are here because the House Republicans passed a budget that would give billions of dollars in additional tax breaks to the wealthy. Let me be clear. These are not the same tax cuts passed during the Bush Administration. **The Republican budget would go much further and give the wealthy even more.**

On April 12, 2012, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities issued a report examining how much the House Republicans would give to the rich under these new tax breaks. Their report concludes that those earning over \$1 million a year would receive an additional **\$265,000 in new tax breaks.**

That is astounding. Let me read from the report. It says the Republican budget “would enact new tax cuts that would provide huge windfalls to households at the top of the income scale.” It says that these new tax breaks will “disproportionately harm lower-income Americans ... disproportionately help those at the top of the income scale ... significantly worsen inequality ... and increase poverty and hardship.”

House Republicans claim they want to reduce the deficit, but these new tax breaks would make it worse. So House Republicans now have to find a way to pay for this. How do they do that? By attacking the poor and the middle-class.

Last week, the Agriculture Committee slashed the food stamp program by \$33 billion as part of this reconciliation exercise. They reduced assistance to every single household receiving benefits under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, which serves 46 million people. They totally eliminated food assistance for 1.8 million people across the country. And nearly three hundred thousand children will lose their meals at school, on top of losing their food stamp benefits at home.

What about the Ways and Means Committee? They eliminated the Social Services Block Grant, which helps 23 million children, seniors, and people with disabilities. It provides Meals on Wheels and other services for 1.7 million seniors. It provides child protective services for 1.8 million children at risk. It provides child care and other assistance for 4.4 million children. But under the House Republican plan, all this is gone.

And now, it is our Committee's turn. So what do the Republicans propose? They want to slash the take-home pay of millions of middle-class American workers who serve this nation every single day. And they want to slash the retirement benefits of new employees who want to serve their country.

Federal workers have already contributed \$75 billion toward deficit reduction and other priorities. They are operating under a two-year pay freeze, and they are helping to fund unemployment benefits for all workers. It is fundamentally unfair to force them to pay for additional tax breaks for the rich.

So, my amendment says, enough is enough. **We reject the premise of this exercise. We strike the cuts to middle-class workers, and we replace them with an instruction to eliminate new tax breaks for the rich that go beyond the Bush-era tax cuts.**

Mr. Chairman, let me close by saying this. It is too easy to say my amendment is not "germane." It is too easy to blame some anonymous reconciliation process and cast a vote for these cuts.

We come to Congress to make a difference – a difference for children, a difference for families, and a difference for seniors in each of our districts. **Every single Member of this Committee is committed to reducing the deficit. But we have to do so in a balanced way. We cannot lavish ridiculous new tax breaks on the rich while slashing programs and benefits for poor and middle-class families.**

I urge the Committee to adopt the amendment.

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