



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET

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A GOP Budget Decoder

House Republicans have long produced budgets featuring many honorable-sounding ideas that in reality mask the harmful effects of their policies on hardworking families. To help Americans decipher these favorite GOP code words and phrases in advance of the GOP's budget proposal for 2018, House Budget Committee Democratic staff compiled a decoder to reveal what Republicans are really saying and the true meaning of these policies:

- **Affordable Care Act collapse/implosion/explosion/death spiral:** A self-actualizing prophecy where the Trump administration actively sabotages the individual market and threatens the health security of millions of Americans instead of faithfully executing the law. Congressional Republicans have aided and abetted this sabotage by obsessively pursuing ACA repeal instead of working with Democrats to improve the law. The Congressional Budget Office anticipates that the ACA individual market “would probably be stable in most areas” and expects overall marketplace enrollment to increase gradually over the next three years.
- **Budget process reform:** This normally means legislation to improve the way Congress approves a budget. For the House GOP, it means lacking the courage to tell the American people the federal programs they plan to cut significantly or eliminate. For example, creating a fiscal rule that will require massive program cuts to reduce the size of the federal government – so you won't see GOP fingerprints on specific cuts, because all they did was “change the process.”
- **Competitive tax code:** More tax cuts for corporations at the expense of everyone else. This includes allowing multinational corporations to shift their profits to tax havens, paying little – if any – tax on hundreds of billions of dollars in foreign earnings.
- **Empower individuals:** Used by the GOP to make their plans to take away critical economic protections and leave people on their own sound more appealing. Examples include replacing guaranteed health and retirement benefits with tax-favored savings accounts, erecting barriers to receiving safety-net assistance, allowing health insurers to choose which services to cover, and dismantling consumer financial protections. Such plans generally benefit the well-off and shift costs and risks onto the individual, while cutting or eliminating programs that American families rely on for economic and health security.

- **Freeze federal hiring:** Allow federal programs to become severely understaffed, making it harder for agencies to carry out their missions, which in turn will undermine public support and make it easier for the GOP to eliminate these programs outright.
- **Increase freedom:** See: “**Empower individuals.**”
- **Medicare premium support:** Ending the Medicare guarantee, putting seniors at the mercy of insurance companies and leaving many of them unable to pay their health bills.
- **Modernize Medicaid:** End the Medicaid program as we know it, drastically cut funding, and shift costs to states, which must then ration care to children, seniors, and people with disabilities. See also: “**State flexibility.**”
- **Patient-centered health care:** A catch-all phrase for ending consumer protections and putting health insurance companies back in charge. This most often means ending guaranteed access to high-quality, affordable health care and replacing it with system where insurers cherry-pick the healthiest customers. This will lead to higher deductibles and unaffordable premiums for everyone else and result in an additional 20+ million people with no health insurance. See also: “**Increase freedom.**”
- **Private-sector participation in student loan financing:** Replace federal direct student lending with corporate loans that reduce financial protections for students, and allow banks to reap profits while taxpayers bear all of the risk.
- **Pro-growth tax code:** Revamp the tax code to provide massive tax cuts to the rich and corporations.
- **Regulatory reform:** Eliminate the protections that keep corporations and others from stealing your money, polluting your air and water, forcing you to work in unsafe conditions, or violating your civil rights.
- **State flexibility:** Convert guaranteed benefits for eligible individuals into underfunded block grants to states with little accountability for the use of funds, making it easier for future Congresses to target block grants for further cuts.
- **Streamline federal bureaucracy:** See: “**Freeze federal hiring.**”
- **Structural Social Security reform or sustainable solvency:** Social Security benefit cuts.
- **Tax cuts pay for themselves:** A debunked claim that uses fantasy-land economic projections to argue tax cuts for millionaires and corporations won’t blow up deficits. Instead, when their massive tax cuts inevitably blow a huge hole in the budget, Republicans propose cutting programs such as Medicare and Social Security.