February 27, 2020

A GOP Budget Decoder

Republican administrations have long produced budgets featuring honorable-sounding ideas that, in reality, are meant to mask the harmful effects of their policies on hardworking families. To help Americans decipher Republicans' double-speak, House Budget Committee Democratic staff compiled a decoder to reveal what Republicans are really saying and the true meaning of these policies:

- **"Debt crisis"** — A false alarm Republicans raise as an excuse to cut crucial programs, especially after they blow up the deficit with tax cuts for the wealthy.

- **"Economic turnaround"** — Continuation of trends that began under President Obama.

- **"Education freedom"** — Starve public schools of public resources in order to privatize America's education system.

- **"Empower individuals"** — A misnomer used by Republicans to make their plans to take away critical economic protections sound more appealing. Examples: replacing guaranteed health and retirement benefits with tax-favored savings accounts; erecting barriers to receiving critical housing and nutrition assistance; allowing health insurers to deny coverage for whatever services they choose; and dismantling consumer financial protections. These plans often result in cutting or eliminating programs that American families rely upon for their health and economic security while generally benefitting the well-off.

- **"Fiscal responsibility/restraint"** — Republicans' obsession with austerity whenever a Democrat is in the White House.

- **"Government schools"** — A disparaging term for our public education system, which enrolls most of America's schoolchildren and serves as the foundation of our economic and civic life. Used to justify the diversion of funds from public to private schools. See also: **"Education freedom."**

- **"Greatest ever"** — Current economic statistics, regardless of how they compare to the past and entirely divorced from facts and context.

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- **"Increase freedom"** — See: **"Empower individuals."**

- **"Mandatory spending problem"** — A distorted view of our fiscal outlook that ignores long-anticipated demographic trends and rising health care costs. An attempt to justify cuts to Social Security, Medicare, and other programs vital to the retirement and health security of our nation's seniors. This is all part of the GOP's three-step plan: cut taxes for the wealthy, complain about the predictable deficit increases that result, and demand big cuts to vital programs.

- **"Middle-class tax cut"** — Tax cuts that primarily benefit the wealthy and/or large corporations, e.g. the 2017 GOP tax law and the President's proposed extension of provisions set to expire.

- **"Modernize Medicaid"** — End the Medicaid program as we know it. Drastically cut funding and shift costs to states, leaving states to reduce benefits or eliminate eligibility for low-income children, seniors, and people with disabilities. See also: **"State flexibility**."

- **"President's great health care vision"** — The Trump Administration's record of purposefully sabotaging the individual market, undermining protections for people with pre-existing conditions, and threatening the health security of millions of Americans.

- **"Pro-growth tax code"** — An imbalanced tax code that allows corporations and the wealthy to avoid paying their fair share.

- **"Promote self-sufficiency"** — Impose drastic cuts to social safety net programs and burdensome paperwork requirements on beneficiaries, despite evidence that these efforts harm vulnerable families and fail to reduce poverty.

- **"Protect students from debt"** — Make college more expensive and less attainable by slashing resources for federal student loan and grant programs.

- **"Regulatory reform/relief"** — 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.

- **"Revenues are record high"** — Nominal revenues are rising – as they always do whenever the economy is growing. Ignores the fact that, as a share of the economy, revenues are near record lows due to the GOP tax law.

- **"Secure the border"** — Divert taxpayer money to pay for a wasteful border wall that the President promised Mexico would pay for while implementing cruel and irrational immigration policies.

- **"Slowing the rate of increase"** — Cutting spending below what is needed to provide benefits promised under current law. Usually accomplished through reducing benefits or taking away benefits altogether from some subset of families.

- **"Social Security reform"** — Social Security benefit cuts.

- **"State flexibility"** — Convert guaranteed benefits for eligible individuals into underfunded state block grants with little accountability for how the funds are used, making it easier for future Republican lawmakers to target block grants for further cuts.

- **"Streamline bureaucracy"** — 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 Republicans to eliminate these programs outright.

- **"Tax cuts pay for themselves"** — A debunked claim that uses fantasy economic projections to claim tax giveaways to corporations and the wealthy won't increase deficits. Instead, when their massive tax cuts inevitably blow a hole in the budget, Republicans propose cuts to vital programs like Medicare and Social Security to cover the costs.

- **"Wasteful spending"** — Spending on programs that support families, promote our economic and national security, and invest in our nation's future. Never applies to unjustified defense spending or tax cuts for the wealthy.