

THE PRESIDENT'S BUDGET & HISPANIC AMERICANS: More of the Same Misplaced Priorities

Key Points:

- **The Bush Administration's FY 2008 budget continues with more of the same wrong priorities of the past six years.**
- **Democrats are committed to a new direction for America in which the interests of hardworking Hispanic American families take priority over the special interests.**

Democrats believe that on every issue our nation faces, we must pursue policies that take our country in a new direction. The Bush Administration's FY 2008 budget fails on that score; it continues with more of the same wrong priorities of the past six years that have failed Hispanic families and the American people. It is fiscally reckless, adding trillions to the deficit over the next 10 years, and morally irresponsible, slashing funding for key priorities, such as health care and education. Indeed, in every area, from health care to education to veterans to job training to small business to energy to community revitalization, the President's budget shortchanges hardworking Hispanic American families. By contrast, Democrats are fighting for a budget that reflects the values of America's working families.

Cuts Vital Health Care Programs. More than 14.1 million Hispanic Americans – one in three – are without health insurance, an increase of more than two million during the President's tenure in the White House. [CPS, 8/06] And yet the President's budget slashes Medicare and Medicaid by more than \$300 billion. In addition, the President's budget significantly underfunds the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), despite the fact that there are nearly three million uninsured Hispanic children across the country. [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2006] The President's budget also slashes health professions training, much of which aids minority medical students, by 66 percent; slashes HRSA's Scholarships for Disadvantaged Students program; cuts the National Center for Minority Health and Health Disparities at NIH; cuts the Healthy Start infant mortality initiative; and cuts the Office of Minority Health.

Underfunds K-12 Education and Higher Education. The President's budget betrays the more than ten million Hispanic children enrolled in K-12 school, by underfunding No Child Left Behind (NCLB) programs by \$14.8 billion. Under the budget, 3.2 million children overall will be denied the extra reading and math help they were promised by NCLB. Also, 2 million children will be denied after-school program activities promised by NCLB. The budget fails to increase Language Acquisition State Grants to keep up with the growing number of students who are English language learners. In addition, it eliminates several key education programs, including the Even Start family literacy program – with 46 percent of those enrolled in Even Start being Hispanic. It also eliminates several programs to make college more affordable (Perkins Loans Cancellations, Supplemental Education Opportunity Grants, and Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnerships). In addition, it fails to increase funding for the Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions program, which aids universities serving large percentages of Hispanic students, and the migrant education program, which helps the children of migrant workers attend college,

Does Not Do Enough to Protect America Here At Home. The President's budget slashes grants for first responders by 45 percent, including cutting firefighter grants by 55 percent and state homeland security grants by 52 percent. The budget also eliminates the Law Enforcement Terrorist Prevention Program (LETPP). It also cuts aid to state and local law enforcement by 56 percent, slashing the successful COPS program by 94 percent.

Fails to Honor Promises to Hispanic American Veterans and Troops. In the United States, there are 1.1 million Hispanic American veterans. [Census, 2006] Nearly 144,000 brave Hispanic American men and women have served their country in Afghanistan and Iraq since 2001. [DOD, 1/31/07] At a time when wounded troops returning from Iraq could overwhelm the VA health system, the President's budget shortchanges veterans' health care, providing an increase in FY 2008, but cutting funds in FY 2009 and 2010 (below the proposed FY 2008 level) and freezing funding for VA health care thereafter. The budget also continues to ignore the mental well-being of soldiers returning from Afghanistan and Iraq. The very men and women who put their lives on the line are not receiving the mental health services needed to assist them and their families as they return to civilian life.

Cuts Job Training and Employment Assistance. The real median household income for Hispanic families has dropped \$1,631 since 2000 and the number of Hispanic Americans living in poverty has grown by 1.7 million. More than one in five – 9.4 million – Hispanic Americans live below the poverty level. [CPS, 8/06] And yet the President's budget cuts critical job training and employment services by \$639 million. It also eliminates funding for the National Farmworker Job Program. In addition, it slashes funding for vocational education by 49 percent below the FY 2007 enacted level – drastically cutting back on innovative career and technical education programs for students attending high school and community college.

Cuts Small Business Administration – Undercutting Help to Expand and Add to the Nation's 1.6 Million Hispanic-Owned Small Businesses. Small businesses employ nearly half of all workers and create three out of four new jobs, but the President cuts the Small Business Administration by 25 percent from last year's request and 45 percent from 2001. The budget cuts 17 out of 25 core programs, including key business counseling and outreach programs such as Small Business Development Centers, Women's Business Centers, the Program for Investment in Microentrepreneurs and technical assistance programs.

Leaves Hispanic American Families Out in the Cold. Average costs for American families to heat their homes this winter are up 57% from 2001. [EIA, 2/07] Yet the Bush Administration cuts low-income home energy assistance (LIHEAP) for families by \$480 million, slashing help to working Americans to pay their energy bills. [FFIS, 2/07] Further, the President is cutting by 40 percent the Weatherization Assistance Program, denying help to an estimated 40,000 low-income Americans who are on waiting lists to reduce their energy bills by purchasing storm windows and insulation to improve their home's energy efficiency.

Prices Hard-Working, Tax-Paying Legal Immigrants Out of U.S. Citizenship. The President's budget would depend on an average increase of 66 percent in immigration application fees to fund the work of the Citizenship and Immigration Services agency. Such an increase would effectively auction off citizenship to the highest bidder and place naturalization out of the reach of many legal immigrants. The Bush budget should be honoring our history as a nation of immigrants and not deny citizenship based on income.

Zeroes Out Funding for Rural Community Advancement Program. The President's budget discontinues funding for the Agriculture Department's Rural Community Advancement Program (RCAP), which provides critical grant funding to enable sewer upgrades and deliver potable drinking water for rural communities. This elimination would have a negative impact on colonias, unincorporated communities located within 150 miles of the U.S.-Mexico border, that lack adequate sewage systems and drainage to deliver safe, sanitary drinking water.

Revives Attack on Social Security. Social Security provides up to 2.3 million Hispanic Americans a secure retirement after a lifetime of hard work, but the President once again proposes to privatize Social Security. This would cut Social Security benefits for the middle class and add trillions to the national debt.

Cuts Funding for U.S. Environmental Programs, Including the Clean Water Program. For the seventh year in a row, the Bush budget proposes significantly cutting funding for programs that protect public health and the environment. It slashes funding for the states' Clean Water revolving loan funds, which help improve wastewater treatment, by more than \$396 million. [FFIS, 2/07] The President's budget also cuts the nation's funding for environmental justice programs that protect the health of low-income and minority communities from environmental toxins by nearly \$2 million or 28 percent below 2007.

Cuts Funding For Vital Community Revitalization. The budget eliminates \$631 million in funding from the Community Services Block Grant program, which works to lessen poverty in communities, and cuts \$500 million in funding from the Social Services Block Grant, which provides people with social services directed toward achieving economic self-sufficiency. [FFIS, 2/07] The budget also slashes \$741 million in Community Development Block Grant funding, which provides critically-important funding for affordable housing, employment counseling, and transitional assistance. [FFIS, 2/07]