

The LABOR Paper

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GOP HOUSE PASSES BUDGET AS AFL-CIO CAMPAIGNS AGAINST IT

by Mark Gruenberg, PAI Staff Writer

WASHINGTON, D.C. (PAI) — As the House’s ruling Republicans wrangled over the size, shape and priorities for a budget blueprint for the fiscal year starting October 1, the AFL-CIO and a hastily assembled coalition of progressive organizations campaigned against it. They lost. The GOP won.

Some 214 House Democrats voted “no”—opposing the Republican Donald Trump administration’s deep cuts in health, education and other domestic spending to fund yet another tax cut for billionaires and corporations. Republican infighting made prospects for its passage uncertain as debate continued throughout February 25.

But in the end only one of the 218 voting Republicans defected, and the GOP budget blueprint—giving the corporate class what it wanted—passed 217-215.

“This budget resolution is an attack on the jobs, families and communities of everyday Americans. We call on every member of Congress to stand with the working people of this country and vote ‘no,’” federation President Liz Shuler declared beforehand.

The Republican budget blueprint calls for cutting \$1.5 trillion-\$2 trillion in spending over the next decade, with \$880 billion from Medicaid alone. Federal education aid would decline by 80%. Food stamp spending would be drastically cut, as would Labor Department enforcement against corporate lawbreakers, among other spending.

The criminal corporate class whose cam-

paign contributions and dark money fueled the Republican majority — and Trump’s 2024 electoral vote win — welcomes the House Republicans’ budget blueprint. It gives them a huge tax cut at the expense of the rest of us. It cuts programs the non-rich depend on, from food safety to air traffic control to fixing dilapidated roads, railroads, bridges and airports.

“While Elon Musk,” Trump’s multibillionaire puppeteer, “is busy trying to fire the federal workforce and gut the government services we all rely on, Congress is gearing up to pass a massive tax giveaway to giant corporations and the ultra-wealthy on the backs of working people,” Shuler warned.

“The Republican budget bill...would slash programs like Medicaid and food assistance for children, taking away care from grandparents in nursing homes, premature babies in the neo-natal intensive care unit, and leaving kids hungry.

“It also puts millions of Americans’ jobs at

risk, including nursing home and home care workers, substance abuse counselors, midwives, and hospital and community health care center workers, along with jobs across food processing and production.

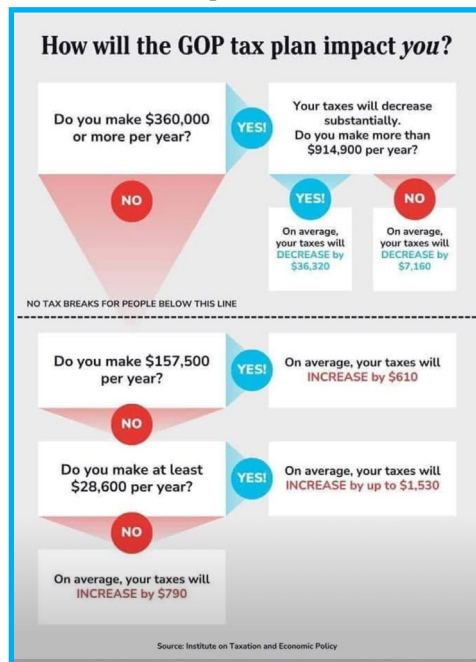
“These deep, unnecessary cuts will hit rural communities and poorer states hardest, forcing those state and local governments to stretch what little budget they have even further. Everyone’s jobs, from librarians and public utility workers to EMTs and firefighters, could be at risk,” Shuler said.

The rural communities and the poorer states are also the Trump-GOP “red” states whose voters cast their ballots for the budget-slashing felonious chief executive. In town meetings with Republicans during the congressional recess, those voters showed “buyer’s remorse,” loudly and angrily.

The House Republicans warred among themselves. A small band of moderates op-

Budget

Continued on page 2



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IDOT announces dates for contractor program

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Department of Transportation is hosting free virtual workshops in March as part of its continuing Building Blocks of Success series for Disadvantaged Business Enterprise firms interested in strengthening their skills, growing their business and bidding on state projects. New and existing DBEs, as well as firms interested in becoming certified in the program, are invited.

March workshop dates and topics:

March 4, 10 a.m. to noon: Understanding FHWA Rule Changes

March 6, 10 a.m. to noon: TCTR Award Winners Roundtable

March 11, 10 a.m. to noon: AI Technology
 March 13, 10 a.m. to noon: EV (Electric Vehicle) Technology
 March 18, 10 a.m. to noon: Consultants: EPAS

Building Blocks of Success workshops conclude this season with the one on March 18. Workshop information, including dates and times, is available through Eventbrite at bit.ly/DBEworkshops. Advance registration is required.

Questions can be directed to IDOT’s Bureau of Small Business Enterprises at (217) 785-4611.

Budget

Continued from page 1

posed Medicaid cuts and other slashes that could endanger Social Security and Medicare. A larger group, the hard-right so-called “Freedom Caucus,” wanted to cut the three programs and other federal social spending. Both groups got “assurances” from GOP leaders and fell into line.

Both groups left higher war spending intact. The hard-right group wanted to pave the way for a \$4.5 trillion tax cut for the corporations whose lobbyists back the GOP, and for the ultra-rich, such as Musk. The war between the two sides stretched into the evening. House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-Miss., was reduced to “prayer” to try to maneuver the budget blueprint through. His prayers were answered.

The coalition of progressives, assembled outside the Capitol, didn’t make it easier for the GOP.

They put pressure on lawmakers to defeat the GOP budget blueprint — and the tax cut with it — by showing how the slashes would hurt people in the rest of the U.S. “outside the Beltway.” The corporate class, of course, hired high-priced D.C. lobbyists to work the lawmakers for the budget, said a prime progressive supporter, Sen. Jeff Merkley, D-Ore.

“We hear Trump say he won’t cut Social Security and Medicaid,” which serves 72 million people, Kate Lujan Redling, board chair of the People’s Lobby of Chicago, told the press conference outside the Capitol. “But we see the writing on the wall: \$880 billion from Medicaid funneled into tax breaks.

“If Medicaid is cut, millions of Americans will lose their care. That’s violence.” And when they do, they’ll jam already overcrowded hospital emergency rooms, Redling warned.

The GOP budget blueprint would also clear the way for more Trump-ordered ICE raids arresting brown-skinned people, migrants or not. That concerns Glicerio Zurita, of Vancouver, Wash., an organizer with the One America coalition there.

“Immigrants are contributing to our country every day. Our enemies aren’t the immigrants or the new arrivals. It’s the billionaires...They don’t care about the rising cost of living. They want us to fight each

other so we don’t fight back against them,” he said.

Progressive lawmakers also joined the fray and promised to fight the budget blueprint on the House floor, overriding recalcitrant “let’s make a deal” attitudes that sometimes arise among House and especially Senate Democratic leaders.

“We refuse to let Donald Trump and his unelected billionaire buddy, Elon Musk — who, when he got here was undocumented — do this” budget blueprint to “distract you from their \$4.5 trillion tax cut,” said Rep. Pramila Jayapal, D-Wash. “We can’t let them scapegoat and criminalize immigrants” through the budget blueprint. “Immigrants are us.”

“In 2022, immigrant households paid \$579 billion in taxes” much of it in federal withholding for Social Security and Medicare, Jayapal added. “Elon Musk’s company paid zero. He personally paid 3-1/2%” of his income “in taxes,” far less than regular taxpayers, she noted.

“We are raising our voices” for the taxpayers outside the Capitol, promised Rep. Becca Balint, D-Vt. “We are legislating, litigating and agitating” in the streets against

the Trump-GOP budget blueprint and the Musk-Trump cuts, she said. “The Republicans are not thinking about regular people, ever... Don’t take your eye off the ball, and fight corporate greed.”

“This budget proves anti-union extremists in Congress are more concerned with giving the wealthy trillions in tax cuts than helping working people,” AFSCME President Lee Saunders added in a statement the next day. “Voters across the country are packing town halls to demand no cuts to Medicaid or SNAP. They’re calling representatives asking them to save public services.

“They want elected leaders who will lower rising costs on everything from rent to food. But instead of listening to workers, the House moved forward on a budget plan that will cause millions to lose their health care, increase food insecurity for families, and jeopardize Medicare and Social Security in the long term. It’s shameful.

“Public service workers will continue to organize against these billionaire attacks... To continue the important work we do, Congress must stop these cuts.”

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