

## **The Double Whammy: State and Federal Budget Cuts hit Montana Families hard**

Beth's day starts at 6am. She wakes up her kids: Sam and Emily, and makes breakfast. A healthy meal that gets her kids ready to learn wouldn't be possible without help from SNAP, aka: food stamps. Our state legislative majority wants to turn-back \$35 million in federal SNAP money (that requires no state match) at a time when almost 1 in 7 Montanans rely on these benefits. To make matters worse, the proposed federal budget would slash food stamps funding by almost 20%.

The MT legislative majority has proposed painful cuts to the programs and education that support families and communities, with almost \$150 million cut from health and human services alone. In DC, the federal budget sponsored by Rep. Ryan further slashes social safety-net programs and eliminates most by 2050. The money saved in that proposal is to go back to the country's most wealthy through tax cuts. Budgets are more than numbers; they are an expression of our values as a society and they affect real people like Beth and her family.

By 8am Beth's commute begins. First, she drops off Sam, a second grader. Funding for Montana's public schools is still up-in-the air. Our biggest investment in the future of our state, the education of our children, has been left up to a series of failed funding bills with no clear outcome in sight.

Next, Beth drops off four-year-old Emily at Head Start, a federal program, serving 4,600 Montana kids. Head Start, which is proven to help fill the educational achievement gap of children from lower income families, is on the chopping block in a federal budget which claims to be the "path to prosperity."

By 9am, Beth gets to work where she makes \$8.35 an hour with no benefits. When the recession hit, she lost a good job. Now, in addition to working, she has gone back to school to become a nurse. The proposed federal budget cuts Pell Grants that help 18,000 Montana students like Beth pay for college. Our own state legislature has sent a budget to our Governor that gouges \$30 million from higher-ed, which will likely mean a tuition increase, making college further out of reach.

After school, Beth starts dinner as her kids play outside, rolling down the hill in the backyard. Emily and Sam would be uninsured without Healthy MT Kids (HMK). Despite the fact that HMK is widely supported by Montana voters, the legislative majority wants to cut over \$25 million, denying future enrollment of eligible kids. Children are dealt a further blow under the federal budget proposal with staggering cuts to Medicaid, a program whose rolls are primarily filled by kids.

By 4:30pm, Beth's sister arrives to babysit. Without the help, she wouldn't be able to go to school. Beth will get home by 9:30pm, do homework, and get to bed late. Tomorrow she'll wake up and do it all again. Beth is a Montanan. She lives in your community. Her kids play with your kids. Beth works tirelessly because she wants a better future for her family.

Our lawmakers should be working just as hard to ensure that we have a state and federal budget that funds the programs and services that keep us safe, healthy, and thriving. The well-being and future of our communities is a foolish and unnecessary thing to sacrifice, especially when the money saved will just be transferred to those least in need through tax cuts. While our country needs to develop a long-term solution to our revenue challenges and federal deficit, we cannot sell-out our most valuable resource: our people, in this pursuit.

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