



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

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President's Budget Reveals Broken Promises and Wrong Priorities

Statement of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities on the President's FY08 Budget Proposal

Washington, DC (February 6, 2007) – At the 16th Anniversary of the Signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act last July, President Bush stated his “commitment to ensuring that the fundamental promises of our democracy are accessible to all our citizens.”

The Administration's fiscal year 2008 budget breaks this promise of full citizenship. President Bush's budget and tax policy, emphasizing wealth over opportunity, simply fails to match his rhetoric.

“It is obvious from the abysmal FY 2008 budget request that this Administration indeed does plan to finance an unpopular war and tax cuts as well as achieve a balanced federal budget on the backs of people with disabilities,” said Marty Ford, Chair of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities.

The services and supports targeted by the Bush Administration enable millions of Americans with disabilities to learn, work, pay taxes, live in their communities, and make significant contributions to our society.

Among the key disability related federal programs targeted for elimination, cutbacks, or freezes in funding include:

Broken Promise: Medicaid and Medicare

During the President's State of the Union Address, he stated that "When it comes to health care, government has an obligation to care for the elderly, the disabled and poor children." However, the President's budget includes legislative proposals that would cut key entitlement programs by \$101.5 billion over the next five years — \$75.8 billion in Medicare and \$25.7 billion in Medicaid. Some of these cuts, \$10.2 billion in Medicare and \$12.7 billion in Medicaid, would be achieved through administrative actions by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) while the remaining cuts would need to be enacted by Congress.

Broken Promise: Children's Health

Although nearly six million low-income children remain uninsured today, the budget fails to provide sufficient funds for the State Children's Health Insurance Program simply to maintain current levels of coverage and represents a step backward from the goal of covering all low-income children. In addition, small health prevention programs that provide a big impact such as the traumatic brain injury and children's newborn hearing screening program are zeroed out.

Broken Promise: Human Services

During the signing of the Combating Autism Act, President Bush stated that "for the millions of Americans whose lives are affected by autism, today is a day of hope. The Combating Autism Act of 2006 will increase public awareness about this disorder and provide enhanced federal support for autism research and treatment. By creating a national education program for doctors and the public about autism, this legislation will help more people recognize the symptoms of autism. This will lead to early identification and intervention, which is critical for children with autism." However, the President's budget provides no funding for this new law.

Broken Promise: Employment

After promising to expand employment opportunities for people with disabilities as part of his New Freedom Initiative, the President proposed for the seventh year in a row to eliminate the supported employment program that successfully assists people with significant disabilities to work in the community and be productive tax-paying citizens. For the first time since the Congress added a mandatory increase to the Vocational Rehabilitation State Grant program based on the Consumer Price Index more than two decades ago, this Administration even failed to add the CPI increase to its budget request. Total VR Act funding is cut by \$54 million while millions of Americans with disabilities remain unemployed. In addition, the President again proposes to cut the Assistive Technology program that assists individuals with disabilities to be successful and included in classrooms and at work by over \$4 million.

Broken Promise: Education

The President seeks to level fund the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) State Grant, the Preschool Grant and the Part C Early Intervention programs and cut the IDEA National Activities programs by \$64 million. The IDEA State Grant request would actually decrease the per pupil federal share of funding for students with disabilities below 17%, well below the authorized amount of 40%. That share has dropped about 3% in the last several years. The special education teacher preparation program is frozen at a critical time when school systems grow desperate to hire highly qualified teachers to implement the requirements of No Child Left Behind. A large proportion of special education students are taught every day by unqualified teachers, let alone those who are highly qualified.

Broken Promise: Housing

For the third consecutive year, the President's budget proposes to slash the Section 811 Supportive Housing Program for Persons with Disabilities, a 46% cut. Most of the \$113 million

cut would come from the program's capital advance component - the only federal program that produces affordable and accessible housing for low-income persons with significant disabilities.

Broken Promise: Research

For the National Institutes of Health, the Administration proposes \$28.6 billion for FY 2008, which is \$310 million less than the funding level in the final FY 2007 Joint Funding resolution passed by the House last week. In addition, the Administration proposes to increase the Global AIDS Transfer out of NIH by \$201 million, effectively cutting the agency's budget by \$511 million in FY 2008 and reducing it to its FY 2005 funding level.

The President's fiscal year 2006 budget reveals broken promises and wrong priorities. The Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities urges the U.S. Congress to reject the Administration's budget cuts and to reaffirm the promise of full citizenship for America's citizens with disabilities.

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The Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities is a coalition of over 100 national consumer, provider, and advocacy organizations working together to advocate for national public policy that ensures the self determination, independence, empowerment, integration, and inclusion of the 54 million children and adults with disabilities living in the United States.