

Cut Pentagon Pork, Not Public Services: The easy way to solve the phony deficit “crisis”



The Fiscal Cliff deal just approved by Congress was both good news and bad news. The Good News: 99% percent of Americans (according to *Wall Street Journal* writer Laura Saunders) will see little or no change in their income taxes for 2013. Wealthy individuals with incomes above \$400,000 a year will pay higher income taxes, and taxes on capital gains and dividends will rise from 15 to 20% to help address the federal deficit. Congress also agreed to assist low and moderate income families by: extending unemployment insurance, extending the Earned Income Tax Credit for a year and extending the American Opportunity Tax Credit (for college expenses) five years. Most across-the-board spending cuts were postponed by two months.

The Bad News is that within the next two months some politicians have vowed to balance the budget on the backs of the most vulnerable Americans by cutting programs such as Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, food stamps, housing, education and job training.

It's tragic that Congress isn't yet talking much about putting the Pentagon budget (which has doubled over the last 10 years) on a diet.

The celebration of Martin Luther King Day this month is an opportunity to recall that King once eloquently said, “A nation that continues year after year to spend more on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual doom.” A December 2012 Institute for Policy Studies report, “We’re Not Broke,” spells out ways that Congress can trim Pentagon spending by \$195 billion a year without endangering our national defense (see www.ips-dc.org/reports/not-broke-2012). That could make a sizeable reduction of the national debt and prevent deep cuts to safety net services. The Jobs-Not-Wars campaign—which includes thousands of Americans from over 130 peace and justice organizations—urges Congress to “right size” Pentagon spending rather than cutting safety net programs (see www.jobs-not-wars.org).

If Dr. King were alive today, he would likely urge us to deepen the struggle against the triple evils of bigotry, poverty and militarism. Dr. King recognized that political and civil rights do not bring about full human freedom absent good jobs and economic security for all. That's why Democratic Socialists of America is helping to build a broad coalition to mark the 50th anniversaries of Michael Harrington's classic anti-poverty work, *The Other America* (1962), the 1963 March on Washington, and the not-yet-completed War on Poverty (1964). This DSA Fund project will work to renew efforts to eliminate mass poverty in the United States. (To find out more about DSA and the 50th anniversary project see: dsausa.org and 50thanniversaryproject.org.)

“You can't talk about ending the slums without first saying profit must be taken out of the slums. . . . There must be a better distribution of wealth . . . And maybe America must move toward a democratic socialism.”

-Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., speech to the SCLC staff, Frogmore, S.C., November 14, 1966

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