

President's Proposed Budget: Poor Vision for Low-Income and Older Consumers

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Trump calls for elimination of Legal Services Corp and home energy assistance; supports cuts and changes to weaken the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and Social Safety Net for Older Adults

Washington – President Trump's proposed budget once again seeks to eliminate funding for programs that have bipartisan support that help rural families, elders, struggling families, and veterans, according to advocates at the National Consumer Law Center. Additionally, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau would be severely weakened due to drastic cuts and changes to weaken its independence.

"Legal services programs serving urban and rural areas in every state around the country are there for veterans, seniors, and struggling families when they need legal help to transition from military service, to save their homes from foreclosure, to protect the Social Security funds they need to buy food, or to stop domestic violence." **said Rich DuBois, executive director of the National Consumer Law Center.** In the words of the late Justice Antonin Scalia, the Legal Services Program 'pursues the most fundamental of American ideals, and it pursues equal justice in those areas of life most important to the lives of our citizens,'" **he added.**

The Legal Services Corporation (LSC) has broad bipartisan support, and the proposed elimination of LSC over the last two years was opposed by the **heads of over 150 law firms** in all 50 states, **185 leaders of corporate legal departments**, the **Conference of Chief Justices and the Conference of State Court Administrators.**

"The budget also proposes drastic cuts to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and changes that would weaken its independence from Wall Street lobbyists," **noted Dubois**

Trump's budget would also eliminate the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), the low-income Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) and the Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) program — three safety net programs that protect the health and safety of low-income families who have trouble paying their energy bills, and provide the core funding for the front-line community groups that deliver these programs in all 50 states.

"President Trump's proposed budget for FY 2020 once again would leave poor older adults, individuals with disabilities, and families with young children out in the cold by zeroing out funding for critical health and safety programs," **said Olivia Wein, staff attorney with the National Consumer Law Center.** "We urge Congress to stand up for struggling households and adequately fund these essential programs." **Wein** also urges the U.S. Health and Human Services Department to reverse course by withdrawing its notice that it would reallocate the remaining FY2019 LIHEAP funds. "The remaining \$37 million from last year's appropriation is particularly timely and needed by the states to assist low-income families after the increase in heating bills from the polar vortex that swept through a large portion of the country this winter," **Wein** noted.

LIHEAP and WAP are targeted to help vulnerable populations, including the elderly and families with young children, which are at risk from severe health complications, including death, from frigid winters and sweltering summers. LIHEAP provides bill assistance for families so they can afford essential home heating and cooling to stay safe. WAP provides cost-effective long-term measures to make drafty homes weather-tight and lower energy bills year after year. CSBG funds community action agencies that are the front-line service agencies that deliver LIHEAP and WAP assistance.

Additionally, the budget includes cuts to Medicaid, Medicare, and Social Security. “We’ve already seen a sharp uptick of older adults filing for bankruptcy over the last few years, and the proposed cuts in these programs will mean even more older adults will be at risk of economic distress by using credit cards as a plastic safety net to cover essential living expenses,” **said National Consumer Law Center attorney Odette Williamson.** “These proposed cuts are tragic as many older adults, especially women who have lost spouses, live on reduced resources and depend on Social Security to keep them out of poverty.”

“As a candidate, President Trump said he would work for ordinary families but his draconian cuts will result in heart ache for regular Americans, especially our most vulnerable families,” **added Dubois.**