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The Labor-Health-Education Veto Override and The Specter of Splitting the Difference with the President's Budget

WASHINGTON – Tonight, Dave Obey (D-WI), Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee and the Labor-Health-Education Subcommittee, will deliver the following statement before the House during the debate on the vote to override the President's veto of the Labor-Health-Education appropriations bill.

“People may like to cast a vote without having to take responsibility for knowing the consequences. But there are severe consequences for voting against overriding the President's veto of the Labor-Health-Education bill.

“If this veto is not overridden, then the best that could happen is we wind up splitting the difference with the President's wholly inadequate budget.

“If we were to do a 50% cut to the difference between the Labor-Health-Education bill and the President's budget, what will that mean for the programs that so many members of Congress claim they are for?

- “For medical research into diseases like cancer, Parkinson's and diabetes at the National Institutes of Health, meeting the President halfway would put us \$700 million below the bill we are considering today. That means about 700 fewer grants for research to treat and cure so many deadly diseases.
- “For healthcare access – to provide 1.2 million more Americans with access to community health centers this bill is \$200 million above the President's request. Under a split the difference scenario, access for 600,000 people will evaporate.
 - “Likewise this bill provides \$95 million so that 200,000 people who can't get insurance because they are medically high risk will have health insurance. That insurance goes away for 100,000 people if we split the difference.
- “Under the President's budget, vocational education would have been cut by 50% (\$581 million). This bill eliminates that cut, but meeting him halfway would still mean a 25% cut.
- “My Republican colleagues worked to push funding for special education beyond what I had proposed in committee - funding the program \$800 million above the President's request. But, defeat of this bill could slash that increase by \$400 million.

- “This bill provides \$400 million above the President to serve nearly 120,000 more low-income kids with Title I grants, but 60,000 of those kids are out of luck if we meet him halfway.
- “For the LIHEAP program, this bill also helps around 1.5 million more families to pay their energy bills by providing \$630 million more than the President. Anyone who votes against this bill will be making inevitable at least a \$315 million cut. That means 750,000 fewer families will have help this winter.

“Please remember, everything I have described is a best case scenario if this bill is defeated and we have to pursue a split the difference alternative. In fact, as long as a sufficient number of Republican members continue to follow the President’s budget priorities like lemmings, the result is likely to be even worse. Those who vote against overriding his veto will bear full responsibility for these cuts in essential investments.

“Explaining the impact of a split the difference scenario helps make clear ahead of time just what the consequences would be of the House’s failure to override the President’s veto.”

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