

Responsibly Address Our Fiscal Challenges While Investing In Our Future

Addressing the “fiscal cliff” will take a balanced approach that includes new revenue, revitalizes the economy, and improves our environment. Congress has a remarkable opportunity to define a new course for our economy which recognizes that a healthy environment and a healthy economy go hand in hand.

That means avoiding further spending cuts to conservation and other environmental programs, ending tax breaks for dirty fuels, and investing in clean energy and a healthy environment that will ensure a stronger economy and a healthier future for all Americans.

More Harm than Good: Cuts to Clean Energy and the Environment

The budgetary “sequester” scheduled for January 2013 must be avoided in order to prevent deep and damaging cuts to federal programs that support public lands and the communities and wildlife that depend on them, clean air and water, and a sustainable energy future. At the same time, a poorly crafted plan to replace the sequester could be as bad or worse for human health, the environment, and our struggling economy.

The sequester itself would impose an across-the-board 8.2 percent cut in domestic discretionary programs, a category that includes virtually every environmental program.



Environmental programs are only 1.25% of the budget, but provide enormous benefits. Examples of what the sequester or a similarly bad budget deal could mean, include:

- Closure of some national parks, wildlife refuges, and ending visitor programs on these and other public lands, severely impacting the nearly \$650 billion annual economic contribution generated by outdoor recreation, much of which is supported by activities on these lands;
- Cuts to research and development programs at the Office of Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency will hinder the creation of new, world-leading American technologies in wind, solar and biofuels;
- Cutting EPA's Clean Water State Revolving Fund will cripple a critical tool for addressing pollution from sewage systems and storm water runoff that threatens public health and our use and enjoyment of waterways. Cutting a program that has created between 1.4 and 2 million jobs since 1988 will only undermine needed investment in our public water infrastructure and cost thousands of jobs.



These programs are very popular and important for protecting public health, wildlife, public lands, clean air and water and a sustainable energy future. They also contribute a great deal to the economy by creating jobs and reducing health care and other costs associated with pollution, invasive species, fire, and other challenges.

Dirty air and water, closed parks, harming wildlife and crumbling infrastructure won't balance the budget, but it will create lasting harm to the economy and the environment.



Photo: BLM

Raising Revenue: End Polluter Subsidies

Cuts won't balance the budget. Any responsible budget plan must include raising new revenue. A good place to start is closing tax loopholes that waste money and cause pollution.

One way to achieve this would be to end century-old giveaways to Big Oil. Big Oil continues to collect tens of billions in profits every year while producing pollution that degrades our climate, environment, and public health. Ending these subsidies would save billions of dollars every year and improve the health of our communities.

Fossil fuels generate pollution that causes asthma, heart disease, and cancer, and disrupt our climate. In the United States alone, the public health cost of fossil fuels exceeds \$120 billion a year, according to the National Academy of Sciences. And the effects of climate change—including extreme weather, declining food production, rising sea levels, and diseases—cost hundreds of billions of dollars annually.

Ending subsidies to Big Oil would save money and cut pollution that is endangering the health of our children and communities.

Revitalizing the Economy: Invest in Clean Energy



Photo: NREL

A balanced budget deal should make America stronger over the long term. Clean energy is already helping stabilize the economy by creating jobs and cutting pollution.

A strong renewable energy sector is vital to the economy and will help America remain competitive in the international market. For example, the Production Tax Credit (PTC) has helped wind energy grow steadily in the past decade, doubling in size since 2009. We now have nearly 500 wind energy facilities across 44 states which create jobs along with clean, renewable energy. Overall, wind energy supports

more than 75,000 existing jobs. Wind energy is also responsible for preventing the release of 65 million tons of carbon dioxide, 75,000 metric tons of sulfur dioxide emissions and 50,000 metric tons of nitrogen oxide emissions annually; pollution that is linked to cancer, lung disease, heart attacks, asthma, and climate disruption.

If the tax credit is not renewed before the end of this year, this progress will grind to a halt putting as many as 36,000 jobs on the chopping block and endangering our children's health



Photo: Siemens AG

Investments in wind, solar, and other forms of renewable energy such as the Production Tax Credit will continue to strengthen and diversify the economy. Doing so will create thousands of new, domestic jobs and will help ensure that we have a cleaner, more secure, energy independent nation in the future.

In conclusion, to put the nation's fiscal house in order over the long term, we need an economy that is cleaner, healthier, stronger, and made to last. A balanced approach to deficit reduction is where we must start.