

Deficit panel's proposed cuts draw flak from Trumka, EPI

By MIKE HALL

WASHINGTON, D.C. — A preliminary report from the federal Budget Deficit Commission calling for raising the retirement age, killing the tax deduction for home mortgage interest, and fully taxing workers' health care benefits — among other things — drew flak from national AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka.

"(This report) tells working Americans to 'Drop Dead,'" Trumka said. "Especially in these tough economic times. It is unconscionable to be proposing cuts to the critical economic lifelines for working people — Social Security and Medicare. Some people are saying this plan is just a 'starting point.' Let me be clear, it is not."

The preliminary report, prepared by the commission's co-chairs Alan Simpson and Erskine Bowles, calls for deep spending cuts in vital programs, reduced Social Security benefits, tax code changes, including reduced corporate tax rates and lower tax rates for the

wealthy, along with tax cuts for middle- and low-income workers.

John Irons, policy director at the Economic Policy Institute (EPI), says the report "shows the commission is running severely off the track."

In particular, nearly half of the adjustments come from cuts to discretionary spending — a portion of the budget that is not responsible for long-term deficits, Irons said. "The suggested reductions include a wide range of cuts

that would cost jobs and increase financial burdens on working families."

Irons says the report does little to acknowledge that unemployment remains high and is expected to remain high for several years. But by starting huge spending cuts in 2012 "the report does not allow enough time for the economy to recover, nor does it call for the policies necessary to get the economy back on track," he said. "The spending reduction of over \$68 billion in 2012

ramping up to \$140 billion in 2015 would mean a slower economy and higher unemployment for an already weakened labor market.

The real effort to right the economy, says Trumka, should be focusing on the jobs deficit. "Working families already paid for Wall Street's party that tanked our economy," Trumka said. "If we actually want to address our economic problems, we need to end tax breaks that send American jobs overseas and

invest in creating jobs by rebuilding our crumbling infrastructure and green technologies."

The commission's final report is due Dec. 1 and it must be approved by 14 of the 18 commission members — one of whom is former Service Employees International Union president Andy Stern. If it is passed, it will go to Congress for a vote before the end of the year.

(Editor's Note: Mike Hall writes for the AFL-CIO Now news blog.)

...Merkley seeks to end filibuster abuse

(From Page 1)

erful interests can have lobbyists night and day to seek that opportunity to get that supermajority and move forward, while on grassroots issues affecting working Americans it's much harder to sustain the continuous push."

Merkley used the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) as an example of why the filibuster should be changed. EFCA, organized labor's top legislative issue, is a bill that would add more teeth to labor law and make it easier for workers to form a union. The bill had majority support in the 2007 Senate, but not the 60 votes to invoke cloture. In 2009, with seemingly enough support to invoke cloture, it still stalled.

"In 2007 (EFCA) had sponsors who weren't sponsors in 2009, when the real push came from very powerful interest groups," Merkley said. "This is very discouraging. EFCA should have been

voted on so all of us know where every senator stood."

Merkley expressed further frustration over Republican efforts using the filibuster to block Democratic bills aimed at creating jobs and improving the economy.

"There were things we were trying to do to put people back to work — and absolutely opposed by the Republican leadership, primarily because it would put people back to work, and anything that improves the economy they thought would not be helpful for Nov. 2 (midterm elections)."

In one instance, Merkley had introduced an amendment to a small business jobs bill seeking to take \$30 billion away from Wall Street and use it to capitalize healthy "main street" banks so those banks could get loans out to community businesses.

"Small business could create a lot of jobs if only they could get access to

credit," Merkley said. "At this point, credit had been frozen up. The concept didn't cost the country a dime. In fact, it makes money for the country."

Merkley said GOP leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky saw it and immediately turned it into election fodder as Democrats wanting more money to bail out big banks.

"This is the sort of situation that just drives me nuts," Merkley said. "We're not talking about Wall Street, we're talking about Main Street. We're not talking about big banks, we're talking about small banks. We're not talking about unhealthy banks, we're talking about healthy banks. We're not talking about bonuses for Wall Street's bazil-

lionaires, we're talking about jobs for working Americans. Complete opposite. Night and day. They said they absolutely wouldn't support the bill with this piece in it."

Another Merkley proposal would have provided low-cost lending to enable energy saving renovations to be done, creating jobs for construction workers while reducing energy bills for homeowners and businesses. "We could not move any of this with Republicans blocking it," Merkley said. "If the minority believes there is something so critical, there has to be a price that they pay to carry that fight and it has to be visible — transparent to the American public so the public can respond."

**'American Made'
in the Northwest**



Mon-Fri 9:30-7:30 Sat 9:30-5:30 Sun 12-6

Labor Union Hearing Instrument Benefits Offered

According to The Better Hearing Institute, the #1 reason for hearing loss today is...NOISE EXPOSURE. In most cases it only takes 8 total hours of damaging noise exposure to cause hearing loss.

Willoughby Hearing Aid Centers was founded in 1949 in Oregon.

Willoughby Hearing wants union members to know we support America first. In fact, we work exclusively with the ONLY major manufacturer that is American Owned & Operated.

Willoughby has special programs just for union members that provide exclusive price discounts, unlimited service and complete warranty coverage for up to 3 years.

Willoughby's licensed hearing professionals conduct comprehensive hearing evaluations at no charge (or obligations) to union members and their families. If you or a loved one are challenged by hearing loss, please contact us to schedule an appointment for a free comprehensive evaluation with no obligation. Make sure to mention your Union affiliation when you call.

Call 1-877-W-I-L-L-H-E-A-R or visit www.willhear.com for locations nearest you.



Sharon Maynard
• Social Security Disability



Nelson Hall
• Personal Injury
• Workers Compensation

Serious Injury and Death Cases

- Construction Injuries
- Automobile Accidents
- Medical, Dental and Legal Malpractice
- Workers' Compensation Injuries
- Social Security Claims



BENNETT, HARTMAN,
MORRIS & KAPLAN, LLP
ATTORNEYS

"Working hard for hard working people"

111 SW FIFTH AVENUE, SUITE 1650
PORTLAND, OREGON 97204

503 227-4600

WWW.BENNETTHARTMAN.COM

Our Legal Staff are Proud Members of UFCW Local 555