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**NEXT WEEK:****CAREERS  
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# Opinion

## Trump's Budget: Wrecking Ball Aimed at Black Communities

Trump's budget proposal for fiscal year 2018 is in many ways an attack on communities of color, specifically African Americans and those who are low-income.

In the budget plan released this week, Trump proposes cutting \$800 billion from Medicaid, the government-funded program for low-income people. Medicaid is by no means a program set aside for Black people. But, because we are more likely to be low income, African Americans are more likely to use this benefit.

Similarly, Black people are twice as likely as Whites to have used the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, commonly known as food stamps. Thirty-one percent of African Americans have used food stamps while 15 percent of Whites have used the benefit.

Trump's planned gutting of the social safety net didn't stop at housing and health care but also involves slashing \$3 billion from the Department of Housing and Urban Development's budget allotted for rental assistance and set aside to help distressed neighborhoods with public housing.

In September, during the presidential campaign, Trump called Flint's water problem "a shame" and vowed to fix it quickly and effectively. But, instead of committing

Keith  
RushingNNPA  
Columnist

resources to address lead poisoning, a national problem affecting millions of families in the United States, Trump plans to cut the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's budget for the lead-risk reduction program.

Lead poisoning is a seri-

“Instead of committing resources to address lead poisoning...Trump plans to cut the [EPA's] budget

ous national problem. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that at least 4 million U.S. households with children have elevated levels of lead, which can cause long-term harm to brain development and the nervous system.

A recent investigative report identified 3,000 areas of the country with lead poisoning rates that far exceed national water safety standards, reminiscent of Flint, Michigan's catastrophic water contamination that first garnered national attention in 2015.

This crisis is particularly relevant to African Americans because Black children

between ages 1 and 5 are more vulnerable to lead exposure than any other racial group, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

In a recent conversation, Dr. Mark Mitchell, a co-chair of the National Medical Association's commission on environmental health talked about what lead does and how it impacts Black children.

"This [lead problem] matters because of the effects of lead on the mental health and development of children," Mitchell said. "Reductions in IQ, the inability to learn and

attention deficit disorder are associated with lead even at low levels."

"African Americans are more likely to live near coal-fired power plants and more likely to live in urban areas where lead tends to line busy streets," he said. Mitchell explained that one reason for high lead exposure involves lead weights used to balance tires that fall off and get crushed into dust that gets tracked indoors. Older housing and rental housing are also more likely to have old, peeling paint that falls off and contaminates homes.

Mitchell was part of a national coalition of scientists,

health professionals and children's advocates that called on the Trump Administration last week to develop a plan to protect children from lead exposure within five years and put an end to the toxic hazard by 2030. The group, Project Tendr, said society would benefit economically by addressing lead aggressively given that the savings in healthcare costs would outweigh the cost of ridding our society of lead contamination.

In some corners of the Trump administration, there seemed to be some real concern about lead exposure in recent months. In January, during his confirmation hearing, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Secretary Ben Carson said dealing with lead would be a priority for him — not only abating lead, but also establishing clinics to address lead exposure. But all he did this week is defend Trump's planned cuts to his agency.

Fortunately, Trump's proposal is unlikely to find much support in Congress. But it does show us who he is, revealing his incredible lack of empathy for the most vulnerable in our society. And with allies like Carson, the lone Black cabinet member, there's no one in the Trump administration to look to.

We must look to ourselves for the solutions we seek. And resist all efforts to set our communities back.

## The Mission of the Democratic Faith Working Group

Growing up in a church parsonage, the eldest son of a fundamentalist Christian minister, grounded me securely in faith and family. My dad's sermons, which were based in Old Testament scriptures as often as they were in the New Testament, offered up pretty big doses of Judeo-Christian doctrines that still guide me today as Chair of the Democratic Faith Working Group (DFWG) in the United States House of Representatives.

The Old Testament lesson found in Micah 6:8 calls upon the reader to do justice, be merciful and walk humbly. In Matthew 25:45 the reader is instructed that we are judged by the way we treat, "the least (among us)." These are the principles that guide the members of the DFWG. We are composed of significant strains of the great diversity of faiths across our nation and in our Caucus. Our values reflect these faiths, and our faith perspectives are the lenses through which we see the great challenges of our times.

Whether the issues are combatting poverty, providing accessible, affordable health care; creating jobs that pay

Rep. James  
ClyburnSenator  
(D-S.C.)

livable wages, rebuilding our infrastructure, tax fairness, environmental stewardship, comprehensive immigration reform, or any other matters important to the common good of our people, the mem-

“Repealing the Affordable Care Act would have devastating effects on 'the least of these'”

bers of the DFWG are utilizing our faith-based perspectives in our pursuit of "a more perfect Union."

The members of the DFWG are actively opposing Republican efforts to "repeal and replace" the Affordable Care Act. Repealing the Affordable Care Act would have devastating effects on "the least of these." It would violate the golden rule of "do(ing) unto others as you would have them do unto you." The Republican bill — that was passed by the House on Thursday, May

4 — would exacerbate the income gap in our society by lavishing massive tax breaks on the wealthiest few at the expense of working people. There is not justice, mercy or humbleness in such action.

In my home district alone, more than 270,000 South Carolinians under Medicare age have pre-existing conditions. Repealing the Affordable Care Act would subject this population to higher costs and loss of care. According to a recent Joint Economic Com-

mittee Report, the Republican Plan will cause 104,954 South Carolinians to lose private coverage in 2018, with their premiums increasing by \$727 to \$970. Additionally, we would see increased costs of over \$94 million in uncompensated care to hospitals in South Carolina.

The plan also includes a big transfer of wealth from low to middle income Americans to the wealthiest of Americans. It provides \$274.9 billion in tax cuts for the highest income Americans, with over

half of the tax cuts going to millionaires. In 2020, 61 percent of the cuts go to those earning more than \$1 million a year. To pay for this, Republicans cut Medicaid by more than \$880 billion. To add insult to injury, health care CEOs are big winners in this legislation; it cuts taxes by \$400 million for insurance company executives.

I have long maintained that the Affordable Care Act is the Civil Rights Act of the 21st Century, basically because it outlaws discrimination against sick people, most especially those with pre-existing conditions. Repealing the ACA and putting discrimination back into the health care system is a step history will not forgive. Public policies that do not square with the admonition of Micah 6:8 or the lesson of Matthew 25:45 are offensive to our moral responsibility to do the most good for the most people.

The members of the DFWG will continue to use our shared values found in the fundamentals of our faiths to inform and guide us in our efforts to keep the public informed as we address the most pressing issues confronting our nation.