

Dear George: Think of The Children

**By Representative Jan Schakowsky**

**Op-Ed**

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**Dear Mr. President:** As you finalize your fiscal year 2006 federal budget recommendations, reports are that you will request an "austere" budget that would seriously underfund domestic initiatives, from education and children's health care to support for small businesses and scientific research. Under your budget, the vast majority of Americans will likely be asked to sacrifice, with one exception: the millionaires who can most afford to give something up. Their tax cuts -- the same tax cuts that brought us unprecedented deficits -- would be protected and likely even extended under your proposal.

Mr. President, these are the wrong priorities for our nation. It is morally wrong to cap spending for children, seniors and veterans while allowing tax cuts for the wealthiest to continue without limits or restraint.

We have never provided tax cuts during wartime. Now, when your administration has projected a \$427 billion deficit for fiscal year 2006 and you are asking for an additional \$80 billion for Iraqi operations, it seems particularly unfair that you have refused to question the wisdom of continuing massive tax cuts. I urge you to reconsider and to send Congress a budget that limits your tax cuts of the past few years.

Given the seriousness of our fiscal crisis, I believe it would be fair to limit the maximum annual cut per household to no more than \$30,000. However, even if you limited the tax cuts to the first \$200,000 in income -- which would be the equivalent of up to an \$87,000 yearly tax cut -- we would have an extra \$19.2 billion in revenues that could be used to create jobs, improve education, build affordable housing, develop domestic energy sources, or clean up the environment.

When you took office, the budget had a projected 10-year surplus of \$5.6 trillion. We now have a more than \$3 trillion deficit. That \$9 trillion swing is the largest fiscal reversal in U.S. history. Your own accountants at the Office of Management and Budget found that your tax cuts are 57 percent of the cost of all legislation enacted since 2001 and have contributed more to the worsening fiscal picture than all other new policies combined -- more than the sum of the war on terrorism, the war in Iraq, homeland security, and all domestic spending increases.

The massive deficit is a great threat to our nation's future well-being. If we do not address that threat our children and grandchildren will be forced to carry the weight of the debt your deficits have caused. It is our moral responsibility to them to reverse our fiscal course immediately and the first response should be to ask those who can most afford to do so to give a little back to their country. It should not be to cut programs for the most vulnerable Americans, for veterans who have done so much to keep our country safe, or those who need a little boost in order to have the opportunity to become prosperous and succeed in life. Since tax cuts, not critical domestic programs, caused the deficit, we should look there for a deficit-reduction plan.

Mr. President, budgets are not just about numbers, they are about values and priorities. Based on the record of your first administration, maintaining and making permanent tax cuts for millionaires has been a higher priority than meeting the needs of the majority of Americans. Now is the time to reverse course so we do not continue to mortgage our country's future and our children's prosperity to pay for tax cuts for the rich that we cannot afford and that they do not need.

**Sincerely,**

**Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-III.)**