

The winds of change have swept the Republican Party into control of the U.S. Congress for the first time in 40 years. And the Republicans are wasting no time making their presence known.

Republican lawmakers have stated that they want to cut the nation's budget across the board by 26 percent to 28 percent over the next several years. They feel compelled to carry out these cost reductions because they believe the recent GOP electoral sweep means the people of this country want their brand of government. They also have a "Contract With America."

Hundreds of newly elected Republicans and incumbents signed the Contract With America, which requires Congress to gain control of the government's spiraling deficit over the next eight years. However, the GOP vows it won't trim spending for defense or Social Security, while promising to reduce taxes for the wealthy.

Based on this financial equation, many Democrats and political observers believe the GOP proposals are a direct assault on the programs that grew out of the civil rights movement, that they would hurt the nation's poor and middle class, and that they would destroy the government's funding of cultural programs like the National Endowment for the Arts, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

"Taken together, these Republican plans would deal a crushing blow to other federal programs, including those that help the elderly and those with low incomes," Congressman Pete Stark (D-Calif.) wrote in a recent congressional report to his colleagues.



Illustration David J.A. Sims

Access to health care is an area where African-American poor, disabled and elderly people would suffer greatly. If the across-the-board cuts are made, veterans health care, disabled veterans benefits, Medicare, Medicaid, childhood immunizations, medical research and community health centers would be cut drastically. For example, Medicare spending, which supports health care for the elderly, would have to be cut by more than \$75 billion by the year 2002, according to a special report published by the Families USA Foundation in Washington.

Judy Waxman, director of government affairs at Families USA, believes the proposed cuts in medical spending would be disastrous. "We are very, very worried that the Contract With America will have a devastating effect on the African-American community," she says, "particularly in the area of Medicaid," which covers varying degrees of medical and dental services for the poor. "When one considers the amount of cuts that would be necessary to balance the budget, it's clear Medicaid will be decimated."

Waxman adds, "The real tragedy of these proposals is that the budget cutters are not thinking about real people; they are only looking at dollars. Hospitals will be closed, people will be thrown off the Medicaid rolls, people will not get the health care they need and, quite frankly, we're going to see a lot more people being sick on the streets, and people dying because they couldn't get the health care that they would have been able to get had the proposed cuts not happened."

Here's the lowdown on what some of the proposed cuts would mean, the jargon, the key players and the proposals that could impact our political and social health for the next several years.

### THE CONTRACT WITH AMERICA

The Contract With America is a 10-point contract developed by current Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) and several of his Republican colleagues. This is a literal contract that most of the Republican majority in the House of Representatives have signed that calls for an amendment to the Constitution requiring Congress to eliminate the nation's budget deficit by the year 2002. Republican

members of the Senate did not sign the contract, but are developing similar cost-cutting proposals of their own.

According to several reports by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Families USA, the Democratic Study Group and the Congressional Urban Caucus, the Contract With America could hurt millions. Here's how:

- 1,992,550 babies, preschoolers, and pregnant women would lose infant formula and other WIC (Women, Infants & Children) nutrition supplements.

- 6,604,450 children would lose Medicaid health coverage.

- Childhood immunizations for children would be cut by 26 percent.

- The National Institutes of Health and other health programs would be cut by \$4 billion, reducing research for AIDS prevention, biomedical research and treatment, and women's health initiatives.

- 390 community health centers would be closed, which would greatly reduce access to health care for 1.6 million people.

- 231,100 blind and disabled children would lose Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

- 4,258,750 children would lose food stamps.

- 7,564,550 children would lose free or subsidized School Lunch Program meals.

- 2,861,550 would lose welfare benefits from Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC).

- 209,050 or more children would lose the federal child-care subsidies that enable parents to work or get education and training.

- 222,150 children would lose Head Start early-childhood services.

- 629,250 children in child care and Head Start would lose Child and Adult Care Food Program meals.

- 1,920,900 children would lose remedial education opportunities provided through Title I.

- \$5 billion would be cut from funds provided in the recently enacted Crime Bill, which seeks to offer crime-prevention activities such as new drug courts, midnight basketball and 100,000 new police officers for our nation's streets.

These are just some of the proposed cuts in entitlement programs. To offset the devastating effects of these cuts and others, Republicans are proposing a Block Grant Program.

By Joseph L. Lewis III

# Casualties <sup>of</sup> the Republican Revolution? 'contract' will hit children hardest