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**The Idaho Statesman**  
Boise, Idaho  
**Thursday May 25, 2017**  
by **Bill Dentzer**  
Page 1 of 2

## Idaho advocates brace for impact from federal cuts

President Donald Trump's first federal budget isn't adding up for leading Republican members of Congress, social service advocates and other interests who oppose its drastic across-the-board cuts to domestic spending, even without what some economists call an apparent \$2 trillion math error.

The good news for critics and concerned advocates in Idaho and elsewhere: The president's budget, which proposes \$1 trillion in cuts to social programs over the coming decade, got a frigid reception from Congress and will not be enacted as drafted. In fact, it's even viewed as a gift for some Republicans who now have something to rail against.

That doesn't mean that congressional Republicans won't pursue their own less austere version of the budget.

The president's budget "needs to be taken seriously because it is similar in architecture to what House Republicans have voted on in the past," said Lauren Necochea, director of the Idaho Center for Fiscal Policy. "While members of Congress have expressed concerns with the budget as a whole, we haven't seen many declare which elements of the budget they are committed to protecting."

Opposition, or wariness, regarding domestic spending cutbacks got a boost Wednesday from the Congressional Budget Office's official assessment of the House-approved bill to dismantle the 2010 Affordable Care Act. The CBO projects that 14 million people would lose health insurance next year under the plan, and 23 million over the next decade. The Senate is weighing significant changes to the House plan, but even with changes, Senate passage is uncertain.

Some economists and tax policy analysts see a fundamental double-counting error in the proposed budget: It assumes an optimistic growth rate of 3 percent — the CBO forecast calls for 1.9 percent growth — and predicts that economic expansion will pay both for proposed tax cuts and balancing the budget. Critics say it can do one or the other but not both. The administration has downplayed the criticism, with Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin calling the budget "a preliminary document that will be refined."

That discrepancy aside, other assessments of the Trump budget note its outsize impact on the president's own supporters in red-state America, many of whom depend on the domestic programs that face steep cuts. In Medicaid alone, the budget proposes a \$629 billion cut over 10 years, in addition to cuts in nutrition programs, health care for children, disability insurance, farm subsidies and student aid.

CNBC looked at the political impact on states by analyzing the change in spending divided by voter turnout in the presidential election.

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In Idaho, the Center for Fiscal Policy, which is nonpartisan but leans progressive, said the proposed budget shifts costs to states via service cuts. Its proposed tax cuts for wealthier individuals “come at a huge cost to children, seniors, Idahoans with disabilities, and community investments that benefit all of us,” Necochea said. The center is updating its overall assessment as new information becomes available.

The state Department of Health and Welfare, whose current year \$2.8 billion budget is more than 60 percent funded by the federal government, is still gathering information to assess possible budget impacts, spokeswoman Niki Forbing-Orr said.

Besides social program cuts, Idaho’s K-12 schools stand to lose more than \$16 million in aid for programs that help lower-income or special-needs children. Republican state Schools Superintendent Sherri Ybarra told Idaho Education News this week: “I cannot and will not support a budget that reduces funding for public education.”

Members of Idaho’s congressional delegation have been characteristically measured in their initial assessment of the Trump budget. Sen. Mike Crapo, a member of the Senate Budget Committee, said Congress will “develop and debate” its own spending plan.

“I am aware that portions of the president’s budget call for dramatic cuts to programs affecting Idahoans and its communities,” Crapo said, pledging to work with colleagues “to strike a fair balance between funding necessary programs and the need to reduce ongoing deficit spending.”

Sen. Jim Risch said it was up to Congress to “set our nation’s budget and appropriate funds” in response to the administration’s “blueprint.” He said he would “advocate for Idaho’s most pressing priorities” as Congress deliberates.

Rep. Mike Simpson said the administration “deserves credit for taking our nation’s fiscal crisis seriously,” but said the budget proposal did not address “real drivers of our debt, which remain untouched by the yearly appropriations process.” He said spending cuts needed to be paired with tax and entitlement reform.

Rep. Raúl Labrador’s office did not respond to three requests for comment on the budget proposal.

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