

**Democratic Views – Budget Views and Estimates for Fiscal Year 2014**  
**Committee on Education and the Workforce**  
**113<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session**  
**March 1, 2013**

Education and Workforce Committee Democrats urge the Committee on the Budget, in developing its FY 2014 budget resolution, to prioritize an agenda that fosters economic growth, grows and strengthens the middle class, and invest in our nation’s long-term competitiveness. Unfortunately, the Congress’s failure to prevent imminent budget sequestration and the ensuing budget is anathema to such a pro-jobs agenda. Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke has warned sequestration is also counterproductive to deficit reduction:

[g]iven the still-moderate underlying pace of economic growth, this additional near-term burden on the recovery is significant. Moreover, besides having adverse effects on jobs and incomes, a slower recovery would lead to less actual deficit reduction in the short run for any given set of fiscal actions.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to destroying hundreds of thousands of jobs, the sequestration cuts threaten a wide-range of critical programs including Head Start, special education, worker safety and worker training. We must reduce the nation’s budget deficit, but we must do so in a balanced way that does not threaten our country’s fragile economic recovery or our long-term economic strength and competitiveness.

**Early Childhood.** Our youngest students would be significantly impacted under sequestration, with up to 70,000 children at risk of losing Head Start and Early Head Start services.<sup>2</sup> Sequestration comes at a time when disadvantaged children are in great need of the proven benefits of quality preschool, child care and voluntary home visitation – which President Obama has proposed to strengthen. Sequestration would also result in 30,000 low-income children losing much needed child care subsidies and access to child development programs.<sup>3</sup> And thousands of workers trying to support their families would no longer have critical employment support. Committee Democrats believe strongly that additional strategic investments in early childhood education are essential to these families, our country’s economic growth, and even military readiness.

As we know the achievement gap we see among some students throughout elementary and secondary education appears long before these students enter kindergarten, underscoring the importance of reaching these students as early as possible. Contrary to the statement made by the Committee Majority, the December 2012 Health and Human Services (HHS) study did find many positive Head Start outcomes related to Kindergarten readiness, including literacy and math instructional activities and teacher-child interactions. The study also found that by the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, 3-year olds who had been in Head Start were in schools with a higher percentage of

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<sup>1</sup> Statement of Ben S. Bernanke, Chairman, Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System before the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, U.S. Senate (Feb. 26, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> White House Fact Sheet, “Examples of How the Sequester Would Impact Middle Class Families, Jobs and Economic Security,” (Feb. 2012).

<sup>3</sup> White House Fact Sheet, “Impact of March 1st Cuts on Middle Class Families, Jobs and Economic Security,” (Feb. 2012).

children scoring proficiently in reading and language arts, and had favorable parent-reported social-emotional development. Many studies have for decades found significant returns on investments from high-quality preschool programs serving low-income children, largely due to lower grade retention, lower special education placements, better high school graduation rates and lower crime and delinquency rates. Increasing federal resources for early learning, coordinated with states and through existing successful initiatives, is a wise investment that will pay off in the short- and long-term and will support states' and local communities' efforts at improving young children's lives every day.

Committee Democrats are committed to improving access to high quality early learning opportunities and we urge Committee Republicans to work with us during this Congress to protect these opportunities.

**K-12 Education.** Sequestration would slash Title I funding by \$740 million, impacting nearly 1.2 million low-income children and putting 10,000 teacher jobs at risk.<sup>4</sup> The Impact Aid program, which provides essential support to military families and Native American students, faces more than \$68 million in cuts under sequestration. These cuts could impact 1,200 school districts.<sup>5</sup> Committee Democrats will fight these cuts.

Committee Democrats will also once again seek to work on a bipartisan basis toward consensus-driven solutions to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Committee Republicans must abandon their highly partisan and ideologically driven reauthorization approach and work with Committee Democrats to develop a bipartisan ESEA reauthorization bill.

Since 1965, the nation has seen marked progress not only in areas of equity and fairness but also in student achievement. Committee Democrats believe that ESEA reauthorization legislation should retain the law's critical focus on civil rights and equity while modernizing the education system. ESEA should set high standards and goals of college and career readiness. It should support a modern assessment system; maintain accountability for *all* students; provide states, districts, and schools with the flexibility to improve schools based on their student, school and community needs; support a professional environment for teachers and school leaders and provide them with the information and resources necessary to succeed; ensure performance is transparent to parents and communities so that they can participate in their schools and support their success; and support consolidated funding streams for literacy, Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), a well-rounded education, wrap-around services, and increased learning time. Additionally, ESEA reauthorization should not set arbitrary caps on funding critical investments in education. Nor should the reauthorization abandon a focus on ensuring states and localities maintain their fair share of funding.

To support such an effort, we must continue to focus on the core education programs, including Title I and Title II of ESEA. Additionally, Committee Democrats believe we must fund programs in the most efficient ways and provide districts with increased flexibility to support the needs of their students. Accordingly, we support consolidating funding streams around areas of

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<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> House Committee on Appropriations Democrats, Report on the Sequestration (Feb. 13, 2013).

critical need to create more efficient programs for schools and districts, increased flexibility in how funds are used while providing accountability to taxpayers regarding how funds are spent. This year, Committee Democrats remain committed to reauthorize ESEA, but only in a manner that continues to support equity in education to ensure that all students have the opportunity to succeed. Given the ongoing failure to produce a bipartisan ESEA reauthorization, Committee Democrats support the Department of Education's efforts to provide states with flexibility under No Child Left Behind.

**Students with Disabilities.** Funding for children with disabilities would be severely impacted under sequestration. It could result in a \$600 million cut to the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), impacting nearly 296,000 children and the jobs of 7,400 special education teachers, aides and staff.<sup>6</sup> Committee Democrats remain committed to meeting the developmental and educational needs of children with disabilities to empower each individual to pursue opportunities for independent living and full integration into society. To meet these needs, Committee Democrats will fight the sequestration cuts and continue to press for full funding of IDEA, which provides schools with resources and supports so students with disabilities are held to high standards and gain access to general education curriculum.

**Higher Education.** In the recession, states have slashed higher education funding, causing tuition to increase for millions of students and families. As costs have increased, more students have relied on student loans in order to pay for school. Today about two-thirds of college graduates must borrow and their average loan debt is over \$26,000. High debt levels have rippling impacts on our economy and borrowers lives.

Committee Democrats have fought to protect students' ability to obtain an affordable higher education. This year we will continue to fight for a robust Pell Grant program for years to come for students who would otherwise need to borrow loans. We will also work to make sure student loan interest rates do not double for nearly 8 million low income borrowers next academic year. Additionally, we will work to make sure students have the right information needed to make informed choices about the college they will attend and the way they finance their education.

This all becomes more difficult with sequestration threatening the ability of students to access college financial aid. The sequestration cuts would increase debt for students with the greatest need by \$765 a year through increased student loan origination fees, cuts to Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants and Federal Work Study.<sup>7</sup> The cuts to the Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants could impact approximately 1,390,000 students and result in 71,000 students losing aid altogether.<sup>8</sup> In addition, sequestration could impact approximately 683,000 students receiving Federal Work Study with 35,000 of the students potentially losing aid.<sup>9</sup>

Committee Democrats support efforts to help more students achieve affordable high-quality degrees, certificates and credentials needed to compete in today's marketplace. The increasing

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<sup>6</sup> *Supra* note 5.

<sup>7</sup> Student Aid Alliance Fact Sheet, "Impact of Sequester on Students with the Most Need," (Feb. 7, 2013).

<sup>8</sup> Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, "Impact of Sequestration on Federal Education Programs," (Feb. 7, 2013).

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

cost of higher education continues to be a chief concern for American families; in the past year alone, the average in-state tuition and fees at a four-year public college increased by 4.8 percent.<sup>10</sup> With the Higher Education Act requiring reauthorization by the end of FY2015, Committee Democrats urge the Majority to work with Democrats to address the issues of college cost and affordability.

**Child Nutrition.** This Committee has a critical role in the fight against hunger and the childhood obesity epidemic. In the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress, Committee Democrats spearheaded efforts to address these issues through the enactment of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act. We continue to defend reforms ensuring food standards are based on nutrition and dietary science, not politics. In contrast to the Majority's mischaracterization of micromanaging school food, federal rules are faithfully executing the will of the Congress and the people in setting reasonable, minimal health standards for foods sold to students in public schools. Children have a right to access to nutritional meals, snacks and drinks, which research has shown have a significant impact on their health, behavior and learning. These basic standards have been informed by scientists, experts and practitioners throughout the nation.

Committee Democrats remain concerned about any changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) eligibility requirements. Changes proposed by the Majority in the last Congress would have resulted in the elimination of benefits for 2 to 3 million people, close to half of all low-income children. The changes would also impact participants of the Free and Reduced Lunch Program, which provides needed food and nutrients to children so they can academically compete with their peers. The proposed changes would cause 280,000 low-income children to lose access to free school lunches. Committee Republicans have not acted to examine the effects of these policies on children's health, development, and education. Sequestration would harm the 600,000-775,000 women and children who would be dropped from the Women Infants and Children (WIC) program, and result in the loss of at least 1,600 related state and local jobs.<sup>11</sup>

**Child Safety.** The safety of our children at school, on college campuses or attending special programs should be the highest priority of this Committee, especially in light of what we've learned from the numerous Democratic-led investigations into child abuse and neglect, which in some instances led to the tragic death of a child. Ensuring states and local communities have sufficient resources to protect children from maltreatment and provide them with safe alternative settings and reunification with caregivers must be prioritized and not compromised by sequestration's dangerous effects. Mental health supports can prevent and help children recover from abuse and neglect. Sequestration would negatively impact children's ability to access mental health services. Among other programs, access to mental health services could be denied to up to 373,000 seriously mentally ill adults and emotionally disturbed children under sequestration. Shrinking state budgets are already limiting mental health services in schools, resulting in school mental health staff having less time to identify and provide interventions for at-risk students.

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<sup>10</sup> College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, *available* at: <http://trends.collegeboard.org/college-pricing/figures-tables/published-prices-national#Published%20Tuition%20and%20Fee%20and%20Room%20and%20Board%20Charges,%202012-13>

<sup>11</sup> *Supra* note 5.

**Jobs.** Despite adding 2.1 million jobs to our economy last year, millions of Americans remain unemployed.<sup>12</sup> Nearly five million Americans have been looking for work for at least six months.<sup>13</sup> The nation's fragile economic recovery is at great risk because of the draconian budget cuts required by sequestration. Sequestration could impact the 124 Job Corps centers nationwide that help educate and train at risk youth. Despite youth unemployment of almost 23 percent,<sup>14</sup> construction of any new job corps center would halt and up to 15 centers would have to close permanently or for part of 2013.<sup>15</sup> Sequestration would also result in nearly every state losing funding for job search assistance, referral and placement to help America's unemployed workers find proper training and employment. Furthermore, the budget cuts could cost states more than \$30 million for their workforce development programs, impacting more than 1.1 million people.<sup>16</sup> The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that up to 1.4 million jobs are at stake because of sequestration.<sup>17</sup> A study from George Mason University estimates job loss will be even higher at 2.14 million, with nearly half of those jobs coming from small businesses.<sup>18</sup> The effects of the impending sequestration are being felt by the unemployed and underemployed as the uncertainty surrounding sequestration is causing employers to be slow to hire. Committee Democrats remain committed to supporting policies that will help get Americans back to work. This includes helping workers acquire the skills that growing industries need. Committee Democrats are disappointed that Committee Republicans intend to once again pursue a partisan reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). Committee Democrats will continue to press for legislation that will create new jobs, build career pathways for workers, rethink sector-based workforce development, and strengthen the middle class.

**National Labor Relations Board (NLRB).** The NLRB administers federal labor law for much of the private sector, including enforcing employees' rights to organize and collectively bargain. Workers deserve a voice on the job. Empowering them to bargain for better wages and working conditions is essential for maintaining a strong middle class and a strong democracy. Sequestration, and the resulting arbitrary cuts to the Board's budget, is only one threat the Board faces as it works to protect the right of workers to organize and collectively bargain.

Since the beginning of the Obama Administration, Committee Republicans have committed a disproportionate amount of Committee time and resources to attack the agency. Most recently, Committee Republicans have requested the Board cease all activity in light of a recent D.C. circuit court decision that invalidated President Obama's recess appointments of two Board members. President Obama made these recess appointments at a time when partisan filibusters prevented the confirmation of nominees to lead the Board. Senator Graham vowed to block all nominees to the Board. He stated, "the NLRB as inoperable could be considered progress."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, *available* at: <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/empisit.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, *available* at: <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/empisit.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, *available* at: <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/empisit.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> *Supra* note 4.

<sup>16</sup> *Supra* note 2.

<sup>17</sup> *Supra* note 5.

<sup>18</sup> *Id.*

<sup>19</sup> Senator Tom Harkin (IA). "Recess Appointments," *Congressional Record* 158: 12 (Jan. 26, 2012) at S88. *Available* at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CREC-2012-01-26/pdf/CREC-2012-01-26.pdf>

Committee Republicans also moved partisan bills to cripple the NLRB's ability to protect workers' rights. This Congress, Committee Democrats will remain vigilant in overseeing the effective and efficient operation of the NLRB and promoting and strengthening workers' rights. The free exercise of those rights helped build America's middle class, and the highly politicized and divisive attacks on those rights that we have seen this past Congress and in legislatures around the country threaten the foundations of that middle class.

**Wages and Hours.** The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) is the nation's basic law governing wages and hours of work. It provides fundamental protections to over 120 million workers. The FLSA establishes a federal minimum wage, sets standards for when employers must pay overtime, and prohibits many forms of child labor. The FLSA was enacted nearly 75 years ago and it remains a critical part of federal labor policy. Committee Democrats support robust enforcement of the FLSA. Sequestration poses a significant threat to the critically important enforcement work the Department of Labor performs to promote the safety of children and other workers in dangerous industries and Committee Democrats are committed to ensuring that the nation's wage and hour laws are enforced, particularly against rampant wage theft and worker misclassification. Committee Democrats will work to increase the federal minimum wage. Today, a full time minimum wage worker earns roughly only \$15,000 per year. This is unacceptable. No one who works hard and plays by the rules should live in poverty. Committee Democrats will oppose any attempt to rollback minimum wage and overtime protections. Eliminating workers' right to overtime pay will simultaneously decrease pressure to create more jobs and decrease workers' take-home pay, further weakening consumer demand and employment. Committee Democrats will continue to work to ensure that these critical issues to working families get the much needed and long overdue attention they deserve.

**Mine Safety and Health.** As a result of a sequestration order, the Mine Safety and Health Administration's (MSHA) budget authority will be reduced by \$18.8 million. At this funding level, all programs within MSHA will be impacted. To protect miners' safety and health, the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977 mandates that MSHA conduct 4 complete inspections per year at all underground mines and 2 complete inspections per year at above ground mines. While MSHA will be able to reprogram funds to complete its mandatory mine inspections during the remainder of FY 2013, the sequester will prevent MSHA from filling inspector vacancies created by retirements or be able to train new inspectors. While this failure to bring on new inspectors will not be seen immediately, the longer run impacts to safety are foreseeable and predictable: MSHA will not be able to meet its mandatory inspection schedule in 12 to 18 months. MSHA's Internal Review of the Upper Big Branch Mine disaster found that the Area Offices had a large number of vacancies and trainees at the time of the April, 2010 explosion, and the lack of fully trained inspectors was cited as a key weakness in the agency's ability to oversee a number of especially dangerous coal mines that were operating outside the margins of safety. There is no reason to repeat this mistake. The inability to backfill vacancies reduces MSHA's cadre of technical positions which will adversely impact the timeliness of coal mine plan reviews. This could cause operators to face delays in expanding existing mines or opening new mines, and lead to increased unemployment.

To sustain its mandatory inspection schedule, the specialists who normally conduct investigations of miner discrimination complaints would be assigned to mandated inspections,

and this may impact the timeliness of these investigations. MSHA expects to dramatically cut back grants to states for safety training, which primarily assists small mining operators. This reduction would reduce the number of miners trained from 180,000 to 60,000. The sequester will significantly reduce some of MSHA's most effective activities that have reduced mining fatalities and injuries: impact inspections, technical investigations, respirable coal dust inspections (to prevent black lung disease) and accident prevention investigations. The sequester will slow efforts by MSHA and the Office of the Solicitor to make progress on the massive backlog of contested cases that have been languishing before the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission, and could increase the backlog of current contested cases. Progress on implementing recommendations from the Internal Review of the Upper Big Branch Mine disaster will be slowed. MSHA will delay mine rescue equipment purchases. Committee Democrats oppose cuts to MSHA as this agency's work is essential to protecting the lives and safety of our nation's miners.

**Occupational Safety and Health.** The mission of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is to ensure the safety and health of the American workforce. OSHA's primary tools for ensuring safety and health are enforcement of its standards and providing compliance assistance. As a result of the sequester, OSHA would be required to reduce its budget by approximately \$30 million. The combination of a hiring freeze, cuts to grants and consultation, and deep reductions in training, outreach and assistance will prevent the agency from pursuing its role effectively in workplace safety and health during the balance of FY 2013. Under sequester, OSHA will be limited in the number of inspections it will be able to perform; i.e., arbitrary sequester cuts will result in OSHA conducting 1,200 fewer programmed inspections of the most dangerous workplace in states that it oversees. Fewer inspections will leave thousands of workers exposed to hazards that could have been avoided, hazards that can cause serious injury, illness or death. Sequestration would also cut essential inspector training and undermine attempts to address new and emerging safety issues, such as hazards involving combustible dust, workplace violence, and new hazards in rapidly expanding economic sectors.

As a result of sequester, it is estimated that the 27 state OSHA programs will conduct 2,200 fewer inspections and many states will likely implement furloughs and Reductions in Force (RIFs). The lack of federal support for states would be a signal to many state governments to reduce the state match (50 percent) for their state OSHA program. There is a risk that some states may decide they can no longer maintain programs at least as effective as the federal program, requiring federal OSHA to assume full enforcement responsibility during a time of declining resources.

And, sequestration will have a significant impact on whether OSHA will be able to respond to worker discrimination and whistleblower complaints on a timely basis. The backlog of existing complaints, currently at 2,200, will grow and future whistleblowers could be discouraged from bringing transparency and attention to critical health and safety concerns.

Under the sequester OSHA's compliance assistance program will be severely curtailed. For example, OSHA will no longer be able to operate its 1-800 information line at full capacity, update its website, or provide training and outreach programs to employers and employees. OSHA's Voluntary Protection Program, which recognizes the best employers will no longer be

accepting new participants and will severely curtail re-approvals. OSHA would also have to drastically cut back its outreach campaigns, such as heat illness and fall fatality prevention. OSHA's efforts to update its standards will be slowed for beryllium, combustible dust, confined spaces in construction and the updating of permissible exposure limits for several chemicals. In sum, cuts to OSHA's \$565 million budget will increase the direct and indirect costs to the US economy from disabling injuries, which are estimated to cost between \$159 and \$318 billion, according to a major workers' compensation insurance carrier. Sequestration puts workers' lives and livelihoods at risk.

**Workers Compensation Programs.** Committee Democrats oppose benefit reductions in the Federal Employee Compensation Act to the extent that federal/postal workers would be made economically worse off from work-related injuries than if they had not been injured in the first place. Efforts should be focused on ensuring taxpayers interests are fairly protected through necessary program integrity measures, modernizing benefit structures and assisting injured workers in returning to work.

**Guest Worker Programs.** Committee Democrats are committed to protecting job opportunities for U.S. workers. Employment-based guest worker programs should be sensitive to U.S. unemployment rates. Committee Democrats will work to see that guest worker programs have meaningful labor market tests that ensure U.S. workers have access to existing job opportunities. In addition, Committee Democrats are committed to ending abuse of foreign guest worker programs and eliminating the adverse effects such abuse has on the terms and conditions of U.S. worker employment.

**Health Care.** The Affordable Care Act (ACA) will be fully implemented on January 1, 2014. States are creating health insurance exchanges and before this year's end, millions of Americans will begin enrolling in health plans through a state-based or the federal exchange. Since the law's passage nearly three years ago, the ACA is producing real savings and greater health care security for millions of families and helping to strengthen the economy. The health law protects American families against some of the worst abuses of the health insurance industry. The law's Medical Loss Ratio Requirement saved Americans nearly \$1.5 billion in 2011.<sup>20</sup> One-hundred and five million Americans no longer face a lifetime limit on their coverage,<sup>21</sup> up to 17 million children with pre-existing conditions can no longer be discriminated against or denied coverage due to that condition<sup>22</sup> and 6.6 million young adults now have coverage through their parents' plan.<sup>23</sup> Seniors have also seen greater access to coverage and lower costs. More than 5.8 million seniors who hit the prescription drug donut hole have saved more than \$5 billion.<sup>24</sup> Last year,

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<sup>20</sup> The Commonwealth Fund, "Insurers' Responses to Regulation of Medical Loss Ratios," (Dec. 2012).

<sup>21</sup> ASPE Issue Brief, "Under The Affordable Care Act, 105 Million Americans No Longer Face Lifetime Limits on Health Benefits," (Mar. 2012).

<sup>22</sup> Department of Health and Human Services, "At Risk: Pre-Existing Conditions Could Affect 1 in 2 Americans: 129 Million People Could Be Denied Affordable Coverage Without Health Reform," *available at*: <http://www.healthcare.gov/news/reports/preexisting.html>

<sup>23</sup> The Commonwealth Fund, "Young, Uninsured and in Debt: Why Young Adults Lack Health Insurance and How the Affordable Care Act Is Helping," (June 2012).

<sup>24</sup> Department on Health and Human Services, "People with Medicare save \$5 billion on prescription drugs because of health care law," *available at*: <http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2012pres/12/20121203a.html>



more than 23 million also received free preventative benefits.<sup>25</sup> Some small employers have also seen their costs go down as a result of the law's small business tax credit. In 2011, 360,000 small employers received the small business tax credit to help them offer health insurance to 2 million workers.<sup>26</sup> Committee Democrats remain committed to ensuring that the ACA is fully and properly implemented.

**Retirement Security.** Retirement security remains a critical concern. Over half of Americans do not believe they will have adequate income to retire. The shift from defined benefit pensions to 401(k) type savings accounts that do not guarantee a pension has further exacerbated workers' retirement insecurity. Over half of workers have less than \$32,000 in retirement savings. Once again, the Majority states its support for a strong retirement system, but has held no hearings on broad reform or put forth any legislative proposals to improve our existing system despite widespread evidence that workers do not have sufficient pension assets on which to retire. Committee Democrats support strong protections for workers' retirement funds and urge the Committee to take additional steps to expand workers' access to adequate retirement income.

Democrats urge the Committee to work collaboratively to develop and put forth legislation to strengthen and expand employer based retirement plans, ensure adequate funding for such plans, and improve the effectiveness of federal programs that guarantee delivery of promised retirement benefits.

**Work and Family.** This year is the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). The law was a big step forward for America. It guaranteed workers job-protected leave when they needed time off for family or health reasons and has been used more than 100 million times over the last 20 years. Committee Democrats are committed to strengthening work and family leave protections so that they apply to all workers. Only half of all workers can take advantage of FMLA. The rest are ineligible because of their part-time status or who their employer is. Committee Democrats also believe workers must have access to paid leave so they do not have to choose between their job and paycheck and their families. Family friendly policies benefit both workers and employers.

**Civil Rights.** The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) plays a critical role in promoting equal opportunity in the workplace and enforcing federal laws prohibiting employment discrimination. Sequestration will severely reduce EEOC staffing levels and weaken their ability to advocate on behalf of workers facing workplace discrimination. Committee Democrats believe it is critical that the agency have the ability to combat discrimination and retaliation in the workplace and protect workers on the job, particularly during these difficult economic times. Committee Democrats also support the work of the Department of Labor's Office of Federal Contractor Compliance Programs (OFCCP) to strengthen civil rights protections for employees of Federal contractors. We will continue to press for workplace nondiscrimination protections for all Americans and the restoration of civil rights protections eroded by the Courts.

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<sup>25</sup> *Id.*

<sup>26</sup> Fact Sheet: President Obama's Budget Expands, Simplifies Small Business Health Care Tax Credits, *available at*: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/02/16/fact-sheet-president-obama-s-budget-expands-simplifies-small-business-he>

*George Miller*

GEORGE MILLER  
Senior Democratic Member

*Robert E. Andrews*

ROBERT E. ANDREWS

*Ruben Hinojosa*

RUBEN HINOJOSA

*Carolyn McCarthy*

CAROLYN MCCARTHY

*Joe Courtney*

JOE COURTNEY

*Robert C. Scott*

ROBERT C. SCOTT

*David Loebsack*

DAVID LOEBSACK

*Timothy H. Bishop*

TIMOTHY H. BISHOP

*Frederica S. Wilson*

FREDERICA S. WILSON

*Rush Holt*

RUSH HOLT

*Gregorio Kilili Sablan*

GREGORIO KILILI SABLAN

*Suzanne Bonamici*

SUZANNE BONAMICI

*Susan A. Davis*

SUSAN A. DAVIS

*John F. Tierney*

JOHN F. TIERNEY

*Marcia L. Fudge*

MARCIA L. FUDGE

*John A. Yarmuth*

JOHN A. YARMUTH

*Raul M. Grijalva*

RAUL M. GRIJALVA

*Jared Polis*

JARED POLIS