

OPINION

Republicans' Latest Attack on Middle Class America

BY CONGRESSWOMAN LINDA SÁNCHEZ

When it comes to what is good for the nation, we are not Republicans or Democrats, we're Americans.

The Republican leadership in Congress is yet again abusing its power to get its way, this time at the expense of America's middle class. Last week, Congress was supposed to consider an amendment to the budget resolution that would have included \$50 billion in mandatory cuts to many crucial government services, targeted at health care and student aid, while maintaining \$70 billion in tax cuts, mostly for the wealthiest Americans. But suddenly, the House GOP leadership had to pull the budget amendment from the schedule because they didn't have the necessary 218 votes. It is clear that a majority of members in Congress, both Democrats and Republicans, realize the negative impact such a budget would have on all Americans.

House Republicans are expected to go forward with their budget, cutting essential services for America's working families and at the same time giving \$70 billion in new tax giveaways for the wealthy. While the Republicans claim that their \$50 billion cuts to critical government programs are needed to pay for costs related to Katrina and Rita, those cuts will actually have to cover the \$70 billion in tax giveaways for America's wealthiest. As if they weren't content enough having squandered the largest budget surplus in our nation's history, the Republicans' new plan would actually increase our national debt by an addition-

al \$20 billion dollars! In other words, rather than ask all Americans to sacrifice a little to help our fellow Americans hit by natural disaster, the Republicans are going to shower the richest individuals with tax giveaways and make working families carry the burden.

At a time when our nation's wages are stagnant and gas prices are stuck at nearly \$3 a gallon, now is not the time to cut critical government services that millions of Americans rely on. Republicans are planning to cut Medicaid, while the number of people without health insurance has increased for four years in a row. Republicans are planning to cut student loans, while college tuition costs continue to rise faster than household incomes. Republicans are also planning to cut food stamps, while more American families are struggling to put food on the table, including thousands of families still trying to recover from Hurricane Katrina.

As we rebuild the Gulf Coast region we must also look to methods that will restimulate our economy, but the answer is not in cutting essential services. Rather, we should look to the \$70 billion in tax breaks that the Republicans are giving to the wealthiest Americans. In April, House Democrats offered a strict pay-as-you-go budget with much-needed middle class tax cuts and a balanced budget. Yet, the Republicans forged ahead with their plan of tax breaks for the rich and adding to

the national debt paid for on the backs of America's working class.

This latest charade by this Republican Congress is fiscally irresponsible and needs to be stopped. America deserves better. My Democratic colleagues and I are ready to get this country back on the right fiscal track.

Congresswoman Linda T. Sánchez represents the 39th District in California. She represents the communities of Cerritos, Artesia, Lakewood, Hawaiian Gardens, Lynwood, South Gate, Paramount, Long Beach, La Mirada, and Whittier.

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