

Austerity USA Begins March 1st: Bipartisan Project to Impoverish the American People

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U.S. politicians have cried wolf over austerity long enough for the public to ignore them. A perfect time, then, for politicians to actually unleash the wolves. Barring an unlikely last minute deal, here's a short list of some of the massive, national bi-partisan-created austerity cuts, [according to the New York Times](#):

-600,000 food stamp recipients will be cut from the program

-Massive education cuts. According to [President Obama](#):

“Once these cuts take effect thousands of teachers and educators will be laid off and tens of thousands of parents will have to scramble to find child care for their kids. ”

-12 billion in Medicare cuts (more to come after 2013)

-Millions receiving unemployment will see their checks cut by 11% (an average of 132 a month)

-Federal funds to state governments will be cut, creating even more deficits for states and municipalities, and thus more localized cuts (the states have already made [austerity cuts of \\$337 billion!](#))

Also, [700,000 jobs are expected to be loss](#), while 70,000 kids are also expected to be kicked off of Head Start

And this is just for 2013. The current plan for the austerity “sequester” cuts is \$100 billion of federal cuts every year for ten years, equaling massive cuts to jobs, Medicare, education, and completely destroying federally funded social programs.

Will it actually happen this time? [The New York Times reports](#):

“In private, Capitol Hill staff members and members of Congress have admitted that there are no viable plans on the horizon to delay or offset the cuts.”

The finger pointing in Washington, D.C. has already reached a crescendo, with the perverted logic being that, if both parties are to blame, it's really no one's fault. In reality Democrats and Republicans created these “sequester” cuts, and they can just as easily undo them with a snap of the finger. Both parties are choosing not to delete the cuts. They just don't want

political responsibility for the fallout, which many economists have predicted will push the [U.S. economy over the edge into official recession](#).

Obama has predictably blamed the Republicans for this mess, even though he personally began this process by creating the “deficit reduction commission” that helped shape the cuts (keep in mind there is zero debt crisis that calls for such drastic measures).

Obama could also just as easily appeal to the American public —over the heads of congressmen — to demand that the cuts be shelved forever. Instead, he’s proposing a “grand bargain” deal that he knows the Republicans won’t go for.

What’s in Obama’s grand bargain deal? According to the [White House website](#):

- \$130 billion in “savings” [cuts] to Social Security, by implementing a “superlative CPI.”

- \$35 billion in “savings” [cuts] to the retirement of federal employees.

- \$400 billion in health care “savings” [cuts], much of it Medicare cuts.

Obama cynically fails to mention the words Social Security or Medicare in the above plan, choosing instead to write in code (“superlative Consumer Price Index”). Obama’s plan to avoid the March 1st cuts still assumes that \$500 billion in cuts will be implemented over the next ten years, as opposed to \$1trillion.

But his plan is just a distraction. Obama knows his plan has no chance of being passed by March 1st. He’s falsely portraying his plan as the only alternative to the March 1st cuts, even though a far better idea — the one preferred by a vast majority of Americans — is to simply to shelve the sequester cuts forever. To not put forth this option makes Obama complicit in the cuts.

Many [pundits have speculated](#) that Congress will allow the cuts to go into effect for three weeks, since March 27th marks a fiscal deadline that will pressure Congress to maneuver anew. This might trigger a new round of haggling over a new “grand bargain” that again targets “entitlement programs” and re-packages the massive cuts into a prettier box. The party that does the most effective finger pointing after the March 1st cuts will be in the best position to dictate matters post-March 27th, so say the pundits.

Whatever the actual result, the Democrats and Republicans share similar enough visions that massive cuts to cherished social programs appear to be inevitable. Much of the made-for-TV bickering is pure political posturing, meant to fool the working people most affected by these cuts into believing it’s “the other party” that’s responsible.

Politicians have been able to get away with this disgusting behavior because there are very few independent voices telling the truth about what’s happening. Many labor and progressive groups are consciously lying about the dynamic, placing blame squarely on the Republicans, thus allowing the Democrats not to be held accountable for their pandering to the corporate elite’s demand to use austerity to attack the social safety net. In reality both parties are jointly attacking working and poor people via austerity, on a city, state, and national level.

If Labor and community groups united in a demand of ‘No Cuts, Tax the Rich’ and organized massive mobilizations, there would be a very different public debate happening right now.

It's not too late for these groups to tear themselves from the jaws of their attackers.

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