

## Advocates condemn proposed cuts to women's, children's programs

Advocates for women's rights, children and other special interests are condemning a House Republican plan to severely cut or "wipe out" several of their favorite federal programs.

"House Republicans are revealing their utter contempt for women's programs and their lack of concern for children in these inhumane so-called budget cuts," said Eleanor Smeal, president of the Feminist Majority, referring to cuts in family planning, domestic violence, maternal and child health and the federal Head Start program for poor preschoolers.

"The 'middle ground' on abortion is family planning — helping women (and couples) prevent unintended pregnancies in the first place," and yet the House Appropriations Committee is seeking to "wipe out" all the funding for the Title X federal family-planning program, said James Wagoner, president of Advocates for Youth.

Indeed, in H.R. 1, the 359-page "Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act, 2011," it asks that "no funds" be provided to the Title X for voluntary family planning projects. The cuts total \$327 million.

However, other observers are watching with interest as the House Appropriations Committee, led by Chairman Harold Rogers, Kentucky Republican, attempts to resolve a \$1.6 trillion federal deficit.

Chris Edwards at Cato Institute, for instance, has no problem with Congress cutting about \$2 billion out of the \$7 billion Head Start program or \$758 million out of the \$5 billion Women, Infants and Children (WIC) feeding program.

Both of these programs are "properly" run by states, not the federal government, and both are inherently problematic, he said.

Head Start has been shown by a major federal study to have little or no impact on student achievement, and WIC subsidizes the baby formula industry even though public health officials promote breastfeeding to mothers.

Half of all the formula sold in the United States is under the WIC program, said Mr. Edwards, who is editor of [downsizinggovernment.org](http://downsizinggovernment.org) at Cato. It "doesn't make any sense" for a government program to be working against the best health advice for women and children, he said.

Since these kinds of federal programs are "going to be squeezed out" anyway in a few years, he added, "I think advocates should start trying to find other funding."

In the meantime, the Feminist Majority, with allies like Planned Parenthood Federation of America, NARAL Pro-Choice America, National Organization for Women and National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, are pushing back against these and other cuts, such as \$210 million from a maternal and child health program and \$170 million from a domestic violence program.

"If you are not going to spend money on family planning, on children's education, adequate food and nutrition for poor and pregnant women, you will spend more money on health care and prison programs," warned Ms. Smeal.

Current funding for the federal government expires March 4.