



American Federation
of Teachers, AFL-CIO

AFT Teachers
AFT PSRP
AFT Higher Education
AFT Public Employees
AFT Nurses and Health
Professionals

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April 26, 2023

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the 1.7 million members of the American Federation of Teachers, I write in strong opposition to H.R. 2811, the bill Speaker Kevin McCarthy has submitted to address the debt ceiling. The Limit, Save, Grow Act of 2023 does exactly the opposite—it would make draconian cuts in services as a quid pro quo to avert a default on America’s previous obligations. These previous commitments were made by congressional majorities and presidents of both parties.

We all pay our bills—most of us without conditions. The federal government should do so too. Raising the debt limit just averts default. It doesn’t create additional federal spending, nor does it create new obligations for the federal government. It simply allows the federal government pay its bills, which also ensures that the sanctity of our fiscal word is not compromised.

Congress should continue the bipartisan history of raising the debt ceiling with no strings attached. Conversations about future tax and spending policies should not be tied to threatening the financial health of families, communities and the global economy. Doing so would be fiscally imprudent and shortsighted, yet that is exactly what this bill does.

This bill creates a false dichotomy: either default, throwing our entire economy into a tailspin, or impose cuts that will devastate millions of working families. The bill cuts spending by \$142 billion in fiscal year 2024 for critical government programs, which will likely translate to cuts of 22 percent or higher for nondefense discretionary programs and ensure insufficient funding for the next decade. These cuts would decimate programs that all Americans rely on, for example:

- Cutting access to early childhood education (such as cutting access to Head Start for 200,000 children and access to child care for 100,000 children);
- Making higher education more expensive (including eliminating the Pell Grant for 80,000 people and reducing the maximum Pell Grant award by nearly \$1,000 for the remaining 6.6 million students who receive such grants);

The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.




- Making healthcare more expensive (such as taking away access to Community Health Centers for 2 million people);
- Jeopardizing the safety of air and rail travel;
- Undermining food safety; and
- Stripping nutrition assistance for millions of women, infants and children.

This bill helps wealthy tax cheats while leaving the country with less revenue to invest in critical needs by repealing IRS enforcement funding. It makes a higher education even more unaffordable by rolling back administrative action to relieve the burden of student loans, in addition to the discretionary cuts. The bill also makes it harder to address climate change and its devastating affects on our communities by repealing many green energy tax credits, while simultaneously promoting energy policies that boost fossil fuel production). And it makes it harder for vulnerable Americans to access Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Medicaid.

Congress must strongly reject the so-called Limit, Save, Grow Act of 2023. I urge you to instead pass a clean bill raising the debt limit—a bill that will avoid default and won't jeopardize our economy and threaten American families.

Sincerely,



Randi Weingarten
President, American Federation of Teachers

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