



# Talking Points

## Federal Debt-Reduction Discussions with Members of Congress

After weeks of polarized debate, Congress and the White House agreed to a compromise deal (*Budget Control Act of 2011*) that increased the nation's debt ceiling, called for \$1 trillion in cuts over the next 10 years, and created a bipartisan Congressional "Super Committee" charged with finding another \$1.2 in cuts by Thanksgiving. Ohio Senator Rob Portman is a member of the Super Committee. While it is important to communicate with Senator Portman, it is also imperative that advocates meet with *all* Ohio Members of Congress.

### **Why meet with your Members of Congress?**

1. To familiarize your Members of Congress with the valuable work of your organization and the services you provide to their constituents.
2. To help your Members of Congress understand the level of poverty in their district/your county and how deep cuts to health and human services will impact your community.
3. To encourage Members of Congress to support a deficit-reduction plan that protects programs that help children, families, seniors, and people with disabilities in need.
4. To have an impact on our nation's priorities and the national debate by encouraging your Members of Congress to reach out to Senator Portman and other members of the Super Committee.

### **Tell your Members of Congress:**

1. More than 1 in 4 Ohio households with children reported they did not have enough money to buy food at some time during the previous twelve months. *Print and share this (Page 9, 20-21) data:* [http://frac.org/pdf/auq2011\\_food\\_hardship\\_report\\_children.pdf](http://frac.org/pdf/auq2011_food_hardship_report_children.pdf)
2. The percentage and/or number of county constituents who qualify for emergency food assistance because their household incomes fall at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. *Print and share this Ohio Poverty Map and Tables:* <http://www.advocatesforohio.org/perch/resources/PovertyMap.pdf>

3. The Super Committee must protect low-income programs such as SNAP (food stamps), school meals, the Emergency Food Assistance Program, Commodity Supplemental Food Programs, Head Start, the Older Americans Act, Emergency Food and Shelter Program, and WIC from cuts.
4. Entitlement programs such as Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid must be protected. Any attempt to turn them into block grants or reduce support for at-risk populations must be avoided.
5. Cuts to employment-enabling programs, such as job training and child care, will force increasingly more Ohioans into poverty.
6. Making disproportionate cuts to programs that provide education, job training, and other opportunities for low- and moderate-income people is an inappropriate solution for reining in the nation's deficit.
7. Most health and human service providers rely heavily on federal government funds. The philanthropic community cannot fill the funding void left by huge federal cuts.

### **Ask your Members of Congress to:**

1. Support a deficit-reduction plan that does not increase poverty or income inequality. It should protect programs that help children, families, seniors, and people with disabilities in need.
2. Oppose shifting costs to the states. One-third of Ohio's state budget comes from the federal government.
3. Support fair, diverse, and stable revenues sufficient to fund these services and invest in Ohio's future.
4. Communicate these concerns to Senator Portman and other members of the Super Committee.
5. Attend an upcoming event or invite them to your organization or site for a firsthand view of how your program (and federal dollars) assists your community/your Member's constituents.

### **After your meeting:**

1. Send your Member of Congress a thank you note for meeting with you.
2. Make sure he/she is on your distribution list for mailings and invitations to special events.
3. Contact Will Petrik at [wpetrik@advocatesforohio.org](mailto:wpetrik@advocatesforohio.org) or 614-602-2464 to report your meeting. Our goal is to meet with every Member of Ohio's Congressional delegation regarding the nation's debt-reduction plan.