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## Americans' Blueprint for a Budget Resolution

*If lawmakers listened to Americans, this is what they would do.*

By Mattea Kramer

Lawmakers are failing the basic task of managing our nation's finances. Yet if they listened to the American people, they would pass a smart long-term budget plan by taking these actions on key issues.

### Secure Social Security

Polls routinely indicate that Americans want [Social Security](#) strengthened, with [82 percent](#) choosing to preserve Social Security benefits even if it means raising taxes. Simple changes to the program would achieve this end. **Lawmakers can eliminate the taxable maximum so a larger portion of wages are subject to Social Security taxes, instead of wages only up to \$113,700.**

### Close Tax Loopholes

[Sixty-five percent](#) of Americans want corporations and the wealthiest 2 percent to pay more in taxes. Currently the tax code is packed with hundreds of costly tax breaks that disproportionately benefit the well-off. **Lawmakers can close or modify these tax breaks, including the tax break that allows corporations to defer taxes on offshore profits (at a cost to the Treasury of [\\$42 billion](#) in 2013), and the tax break for capital gains ([\\$83 billion](#)) which overwhelmingly benefits the top earners.**

### Reduce Military Spending

Americans on average want to reduce military spending by [18 percent](#). Meanwhile, military experts across the political spectrum have found that the Pentagon budget could be cut substantially without sacrificing security, as many costly weapons programs are obsolete or mismatched for 21st-century threats. **A bipartisan task force found [\\$1 trillion](#) in savings over 10 years – twice as large as [sequestration](#)'s across-the-board cuts to the military – by making smart strategic choices.**

### Contain Health Care Costs

The health care system and its high cost topped [Americans' list](#) when they were asked what is the most important issue facing the country. Estimates suggest [a third](#) of health care spending in this country is wasted in a system of uncoordinated, fee-for-service care. But it doesn't have to be that way. For example, some **primary-care organizations have moved to "[bundled payments](#)," in which doctors are paid for their overall care of a patient rather than each test and procedure. Organizations that made such changes reduced costs by [15 to 20 percent](#) without compromising quality.** Medicare is pilot-testing such changes with promising results, and Massachusetts lawmakers have already passed landmark [legislation](#) that will usher in this new form of payment. Federal lawmakers can begin to lay the groundwork now for this change on a national scale.