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Federal Spending: Many dollars, no sense

Compassionate conservatism? The Republican-passed budget blueprint comes closer to capricious cruelty toward the more hard-pressed parts of society.

Somehow, the congressional majority has convinced itself that it must cut spending for domestic programs by \$40 billion, while planning another \$106 billion in tax cuts. The budget resolution for fiscal year 2006 envisions future cuts to entitlement programs such as Medicaid and food stamps, along with reduced levels of support for other domestic programs, including education.

Budget-cutters always like to say that they are just doing what any family does in tight economic times. To continue their analogy, giving \$2.50 in tax cuts for every \$1 in domestic-program reductions is like a father cutting back a bit on food for his hungry kids so he can buy tons more beer, tobacco and lottery tickets.

While cutting at home, nearly \$200 billion in increases are also planned for defense and international expenditures. Overall, this year's deficit is projected at \$383 billion. And the numbers aren't even reliable. As Sen. Kent Conrad, D-N.D., pointed out, the budget ignores \$380 billion in long-term costs for Iraq, Afghanistan and fighting terror, adding more unreality to the whole exercise.

Conrad said, "A budget is a chance to make choices. ... It is about priorities, about what is important." That's true, even when the choice for tax cuts makes no sense for the nation's welfare.