

Press Release

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Fiscal Cliff is Looming
Congressman Paul Tonko joins Local Union, Community and Faith leaders to call to
End the Bush Tax Cuts for Wealthiest 2%
and Protect and Preserve Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid

A decisive win Tuesday for President Obama sends a clear message that our country wants to preserve and protect Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, end the Bush tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans and stop massive across-the-board budget cuts ("Fiscal Cliff") that are currently set to begin in January (resulting in \$1.2 trillion in spending and investment cuts over the next 10 years). The country chose its path and it's not austerity and tax breaks for big corporations.

The groups worry that major decisions could take place during the lame duck Congress in November or December, potentially resulting in the loss of millions of jobs and massive cuts to health care, education, aid to state and local governments, and other vital programs.

Local leaders joined with Congressman Paul Tonko to call on President Obama and the New York Congressional delegation to fight for a fair deal on the "fiscal cliff" that protects Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and ensures the wealthiest 2% pay their fair share in taxes, while maintaining tax cuts for the middle class.

"Now that this year's elections are over, it is time to govern. Our nation is facing a number of unprecedented challenges that demand a thoughtful, balanced approach. I believe that we can bring fairness to our tax code and strengthen vital programs such as Social Security and Medicare through an honest dialogue and bipartisan cooperation. It is my hope that the season for politics is behind us and the President and Congress can get to work addressing these issues with clarity and respect," stated **Congressman Paul Tonko**.

"On Election Day 2012 voters stood up for the American Middle Class and sent a strong message rejecting hatred, intolerance and obstructionism," said **Danny Donohue, president of the nearly 300,000 member CSEA** - New York's leading union. "It is time to end ideological extremism and seek fair, long-term solutions to our nation's problems that put the needs of people and families first."

"We must put politics aside and work toward ensuring the 'fiscal cliff' doesn't mean cuts to education, and other programs that help the middle class," said **NYSUT Executive Vice President Andrew Pallotta**. "Congress must work in the spirit of collaboration and partnership to avoid sequestration and preserve programs that are so important to New York State."

According to Frank Mauro, Executive Director of the Fiscal Policy Institute, "The greater danger is that misguided fears about the economy going over a "fiscal cliff" into another Great Recession will lead policymakers to believe they have to take some action, no matter how ill-conceived and damaging to long-term deficit reduction, before the end of the year, rather than craft a balanced plan that supports the economic recovery in the short term and promotes fiscal stabilization in the intermediate and longer run."

“A faithful budget values every American, prioritizes the common good, and lifts the burdens of poverty. In the stark terms of line-item income and expenditures, it describes the commitments that we as a people make to each other as one blessed community. Each fiscal decision carries a human impact and a moral implication. The federal budget has the potential to shape the better society that our faiths call us to seek out. As such, a moral budget would establish a fair system of taxation and distribution, invest in people and communities through education and the creation of good jobs, protect the gifts of nature through environmental stewardship, and nurture the well-being of all through access to health care,” stated **Sara Niccoli, Executive Director, Labor-Religion Coalition of New York State.**

Michael Burgess, Statewide Senior Action Council said, "The election debate and results showed how the American people value Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. Now, it is up to the President and Congress to respect the will of the people and not undermine or threaten the income and health care security that these programs continue to offer to so many Americans."

"NYSARA members stand opposed to the potential of this "lame-duck" session of Congress reaching a "grand bargain" cutting Social Security benefits, raising the retirement age for Social Security and Medicare and cutting Medicaid, to pay for outrageous tax breaks for the richest 2% of Americans. We encourage everyone to contact their representatives in Washington and ask them to put working families first," stated **Bob Carillo, Executive Director, NYS Alliance for Retired Americans.**

"Our economy can't recover if we're offering a \$1 trillion tax cut to millionaires and billionaires," said **Jessica Wisneski, Campaigns Director for Citizen Action of New York.** "The results of these elections prove that voters are standing with elected leaders who will fight to protect the programs and services that our working families rely on every day. Our communities can no longer suffer from the greed of CEO campaign contributors whose only interest is to make profits. Our leaders in Washington must rebuild our economy by ending the Bush tax cuts for the wealthiest 2%."

Ron Deutsch, Executive Director of New Yorkers for Fiscal Fairness said, “It’s time to put the politics aside and focus on the needs of the people. We need make sure that any ‘grand bargain’ preserves and protects Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid and puts an end to the tax breaks and special deals for the privileged few. It’s time to rebuild our economy from the bottom up, since the top down approach has been a dismal failure.”

This event is taking place in coordination with dozens of actions around the country and state, including actions in New York City, Binghamton, Newburgh and Syracuse, spearheaded by groups affiliated with **Americans for Tax Fairness, AFL-CIO, National People’s Action, US Action** and many more local and national coalitions.