

## THE SAFETY NET DEFENSE ACTION FUND PROJECT

Advocacy Strategy Paper | June 2017

The Safety Net Defense Action Fund (SNDAF), a project through Arabella Advisors, is designed to protect the core anti-poverty programs that make up the U.S. social safety net by engaging impacted communities and a diverse range of constituencies, partner organizations, and influential stakeholders. With a two-year, \$2 million budget through the 501(c)(4) Sixteen Thirty Fund, we will conduct the direct and grassroots lobbying necessary to advance our goal. In partnership with our sister 501(c)(3) project through the New Venture Fund, we aim to preserve the fundamental entitlement structure of programs including Medicaid and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP or food stamps), defend access to affordable health care, and build opposition to massive budget cuts in core low-income programs.

The stakes are higher than they have ever been, and the environment has never been more uncertain. Current proposals would destroy the structural provisions that ensure Medicaid and SNAP expand to meet growing need during a recession, and they would include massive cuts in these and additional programs, including Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Although the Trump Administration's FY18 budget may have little chance of enactment in its current form, it moves the debate so far to the right that even a "moderate" version of these proposals would have a devastating impact on tens of millions of people.

### STRATEGY

The SNDAF project and our partners are confident that we can disrupt this strategy if we have the resources to escalate our field efforts. Our campaign focuses primarily on the U.S. Senate, where our greatest strategic lever is in blocking the process of reconciliation that requires only 51 votes. As the project evolves with the environment, we are also investing some resources in efforts to influence more "moderate" Republicans in the House who have demonstrated some willingness to object to the far right policies of their leadership and the Freedom Caucus.

Launched in December 2016 and led by two national nonprofits, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) and the Center for Community Change (CCC), the project has moved over \$3 million to build the infrastructure of a nonpartisan organizing and policy effort primarily at the local and state levels. CCC's sister advocacy organization, the Center for Community Change Action (CCCA), will coordinate 501(c)(4) activities at the national level.

We designed the project to channel the surge of resistance to build the power and influence required to block policies that would harm low-income people, particularly low-income people of color. Our strategy includes:

- **Individualized field campaigns** with local community organizing partners and state policy and issue advocacy groups in 17 strategically important states. We have directed grants to 25 state partner groups thus far, and our national partners are providing technical assistance and strategic support.
- **Coordinated efforts that connect partners** in each state as well as a broader, multi-issue coalition of national organizations. CBPP and CCC are aligning the work of state partner coalitions, collaborating with national progressive tables, and engaging with unexpected constituencies to more effectively advance common objectives. We are directly engaging white working class people and rural communities in states like West Virginia and Montana, and we are collaborating with national allies to connect the field strategy with a coordinated national effort. We are working closely with

Community Catalyst, Georgetown Center for Children and Families, Families USA, HCAN, and Protect Our Care on Medicaid, and the Food Research & Action Center and Feeding America on SNAP.

- **National and state messaging strategies** to fuel our field efforts. We are engaging in cross-channel amplification that draws national awareness to state and local stories and builds a digital network of advocates for anti-poverty programs, including through collaborations like [www.handsoff.org](http://www.handsoff.org), a website co-created with the Center for American Progress to collect and share stories. Working with Spitfire Strategies and Berlin Rosen, we have:
  - Placed 15 op-eds authored by grassroots leaders who shared their stories of the effect of cuts to Medicaid on their lives.
  - Developed communications content for the field, including toolkits for engagement, earned media materials such as press releases and advisories for events, and training for grassroots groups.
  - Amplified our campaigns in regional broadcast outlets around the country. We worked with Berlin Rosen to target 12 regional media markets for direct broadcast pitches around the Trump budget proposal on SNAP, for example. These efforts resulted in 76 stories in the 5 days following the release of the Trump budget.

## UNIQUE APPROACH

Our strategy is unique among groups with similar goals. The SNDAF project:

- **Mounts tailored, multi-faceted campaigns** in strategic states to mobilize beneficiaries of social programs in partnership with community-based organizations, as well as the groups and consultants who are best calibrated to move key policymakers.
- **Aligns the demands of an unexpected and diverse coalition.** The SNDAF project bridges the state and national, influencing state-level decision makers to move issues at the national level, and it defies conventional wisdom by connecting impacted people across race and geography. We will work to inform and persuade Senators who could face electoral consequences based on their votes.
- **Combines the power of story with the hard data of economic and policy analysis** to drive public opinion. The SNDAF project leverages the national perspective of our partners to shape the narrative with a multi-platform communications campaign that will both mobilize our base and inform the commentary around anti-poverty issues.

## URGENT INVESTMENT NEEDS

The SNDAF project has committed resources to 17 states, and rapidly changing political conditions require both deeper and wider investments. The nebulous threats to anti-poverty programs are now definite, destructive proposals. We are putting everything into this moment. We need resources to nimbly support field efforts so that our partners have the flexibility to respond to ever-changing shifts in terrain. With an additional \$1.75 million, the SNDAF Project will:

- **Escalate field strategies in our 17 target states and intensify efforts around SNAP.** The FY18 budget proposal includes changes to SNAP that will weaken its structure, as well as deep cuts in funding for the program. We must accelerate our timeline for SNAP defense, quickly moving resources to agriculture states and supporting efforts to ensure voices of directly impacted communities reach the halls and in-district offices of Senators in Michigan, Kansas, and Iowa, whose votes will be necessary to prevent the Trump administration from realizing its austerity goals.
- **Expand the landscape of strategic states to include moderate House Republicans.** The AHCA debate in the House revealed deep divisions among Republicans, including a more moderate group, who believed that the Senate would soften some of the worst provisions in the bill. We will direct intense pressure on selected House Republicans, initially focused on representatives in states

such as Colorado, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, with the possibility of additional states to be added.

- **Reshape the strategic terrain of the debate.** We will engage white working class and rural voters in one to two key states, lifting up examples of dissent and preparing this constituency to directly confront their elected officials. By publicly demonstrating this constituency's support for anti-poverty programs, we will challenge the prevailing narrative about this group and the political calculus of their representatives. We will specifically seek to lift up the stories of persuadable voters who supported President Obama in 2012 and Mr. Trump in 2016 using a model of these voters that has been created by outside partners. With this strategy, we can create an environment where Senators see opposition from their constituents to proposals that would restructure health care and cut social programs. States under consideration include Colorado, Indiana, Nevada, Ohio, and West Virginia.
- **Raise the intensity of the national narrative** by organizing impacted constituents with partners in non-targeted states that can attract major media markets. This strategy will help strengthen the resolve of Democratic leadership, focus attention on Republican leadership, and bring a moral voice to the fight.

These strategies require funding for field partners, strategic support and technical assistance from CBPP and CCC/A, and coordinated messaging and media placement strategies in partnership with Spitfire Strategies and Berlin Rosen.

Amidst the tumult in Washington, D.C., efforts to destroy the structure of the safety net are advancing. In this pivotal period, your support of the Safety Net Defense Fund project can protect the lives and economic security of tens of millions of Americans. Please contact Scott Nielsen, Managing Director of Policy at Arabella Advisors ([SNielsen@arabellaadvisors.com](mailto:SNielsen@arabellaadvisors.com)) or you may donate directly by check or wire using the details below:

#### **Check Instructions**

Payable to: "Sixteen Thirty Fund."

Memo Line: "Safety Net Defense Action Fund"

Mail to: Sixteen Thirty Fund  
1201 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 300  
Washington, DC 20036

#### **ACH and Wire Instructions**

Acct Name: Sixteen Thirty Fund

Acct #: 664-430019-9

ABA/Routing: 065000090

Transaction Description: "Safety Net Defense Action Fund"

SWIFT Code: HIBKUS44

Capital One Bank, N.A.

926 15<sup>th</sup> ST NW, Washington, DC 20005

Note – as of June 1, 2016, if payment is being sent in Euros, use SWIFT Code DEUTDEFF for the intermediary bank.

## APPENDIX A: CASE EXAMPLES

### NORTH DAKOTA

#### *The Players*

- The SNDAF project engaged stakeholder groups to form a Medicaid-focused collaborative table that includes Family Voices North Dakota, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, Lutheran Social Services, North Dakota United, Sacred Pipe Resource Center, North Dakota Medical Association, North Dakota Hospital Association, Rural Electric Co-op, North Dakota Farmer's Union, North Dakota Economic Security, Community Health Association of the Dakotas, and Prosperity Alliance. A well-connected and highly respected local organizer, Ryan Taylor, is coordinating the table.
- The Great Plains Food Bank is leading the SNAP strategy and will be engaging many of the partners mentioned above.

#### *The Strategy*

CBPP and CCC are raising the intensity around SNAP protection while continuing to push back against cuts and structural changes to Medicaid through:

- A series of storytelling trainings for grassroots leaders who are impacted by both Medicaid and SNAP and a state-wide tour to collect stories from SNAP recipients.
- A Letter to the Editor authored by North Dakota House Members on the impact of shifting a percentage of SNAP costs to the state, which North Dakota could not absorb.
- Ongoing conversations with the Senate delegation in Washington, including meetings in coordination with stakeholders such as Bread for the World.
- A sign-on letter from a diverse set of voices urging their Senators to reject any proposal that shifts costs to states and abandons the national commitment to funding SNAP.

#### *Initial Results*

CCC and CBPP developed a complementary strategy with a highly effective grassroots/grasstops approach in North Dakota that has led to:

- Engagement with both North Dakota Senators and public statements by Senator Heitkamp that frame health and nutrition as a crucial piece of building healthy families.
- Local coverage in the Bismarck Tribune; My ND Now TV stations, which focus on healthcare; the local CBS affiliate; the Pierce County Tribune; and Prairie Public News, the local NPR affiliate.

## WEST VIRGINIA

### *The Players*

CCC, CBPP, and Community Catalyst are collaborating with partner groups on specific angles of a coordinated strategy and as part of a state-based coalition:

- CCC is working with West Virginia Healthy Kids & Family Coalition to increase grassroots engagement on Medicaid and SNAP defense.
- CBPP is working with West Virginia Budget & Policy Center to lead the SNAP defense efforts in the state and provide the analytical firepower for Community Catalyst and its partner, West Virginians for Affordable Health Care, to lead the Medicaid defense.

### *The Strategy*

In West Virginia, the political narrative centers on white working class and rural communities. The national focus on this constituency means that a shift in their support in one state and a public outcry in defense of anti-poverty programs could have an outsized impact on the debate. We are working to galvanize and draw press attention to this group, focusing on those individuals whose past voting patterns seem to indicate the potential to successfully persuade them. Our efforts with this constituency are being carried out in tandem with ongoing work to keep key influencers, organizations, and others informed and engaged to oppose proposals that would undermine our country's basic commitment to these core programs that affect the well-being of tens of millions of families.

### *Initial Results*

Our collaboration in West Virginia has yielded:

- Deep engagement with Senator Manchin, including participation at several public town halls with state partners, and a public statement that “the 2018 budget proposal is unacceptable,” describing it as a “slash and burn approach” that will impact every state in the nation. The Senator also consulted with our state partners regarding improvements to health care.
- High visibility actions, including an event to engage Sec. Tom Price when he visited the state, at which point his security detail arrested the journalist covering his visit.
- Compelling coverage on TV, radio, and the editorial pages of the top papers around the state in response to the Congressional Budget Office's assessment of proposals. Our partners organized an array of voices to respond and echo the topline against attempts to diminish health care coverage. Using materials from our partners, The Charleston Gazette titled its editorial “Trump budget is heartless” and the NPR affiliate ran a story about cuts affecting “Trump Country Hardest.”

## APPENDIX B: BUDGET

Revenue - 501(c)(4) only	2017	2018
<i>Revenue Secured</i>	<i>\$250,000</i>	-
<i>Other Sources TBD</i>	<i>\$1,361,395</i>	<i>\$388,605</i>
<b>Total Budgeted Revenue</b>	<b>\$2,000,000</b>	
Expenses 2017 – 2018 - 501(c)(4) only	Budgeted	Actual to Date
State investments	\$1,700,000	-
Communications**	\$180,000	-
Project Coordinator	\$40,000	-
Fiscal Sponsor Management	\$80,000	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,000,000</b>	-

\*\*Total communications budget may be revised as needed to reflect changing landscape