The Population Association of America

ACTION ALERT

Tell Congress to Act to Avoid Budget Sequestration

BACKGROUND

On January 2, 2013, automatic cuts ("budget sequestration") will take place unless Congress and the Administration can agree on a federal deficit reduction plan.

The Budget Control Act of 2011 directed a congressional "Super Committee" to find an additional $1.2 trillion in savings over 10 years. The committee failed to reach a deal, triggering the "sequester" to take effect on January 2, 2013. These cuts will be at least 8 percent across-the-board. Sequestration is, by design, bad policy and was never intended to occur. The threat of sequestration has yet to compel Congress and the Administration to agree on a plan that meets the established caps on discretionary spending over 10 years. This failure to agree on a plan will result in nearly $1 trillion in cuts spread across all discretionary programs.

When individuals use the term 'discretionary' spending about their household budget we think of movie tickets or dinner at a new restaurant - discretionary has a very different meaning in Congress. Discretionary programs are those that Congress funds annually through the appropriations process and include both defense and non-defense programs. Non-defense discretionary (NDD) programs include medical and scientific research, education and job training, infrastructure, public safety and health, environmental protection and social services, among many others. Some Members of Congress are trying to exempt defense spending from sequestration, which would further decimate funding for all NDD programs.

Sequestration will have a huge impact on agencies important to PAA and APC members. For example, if these automatic cuts are implemented, as many as 2,300 NIH grants and 1,500 NSF grants could be eliminated.