

Clinton presents balanced-budget plan

The president's offer affects Social Security but not education or environment spending.

WASHINGTON (AP) — Under Republican pressure, President Clinton reluctantly presented a seven-year balanced-budget plan Thursday that would shrink Social Security raises and offer Republicans less than they want in tax cuts or savings from Medicare and Medicaid.

Clinton's revised offer would save \$141 billion more than the budget he unveiled in June, with most of the new reductions in welfare, housing and transportation.

Republicans quickly criticized Clinton's plan, saying it was based on overly optimistic economic assumptions and would not balance the budget. "If they want to keep bringing things to the table that don't have much meaning, that's OK, we'll just keep going to the table," said House Budget Committee Chairman John Kasich, R-Ohio.

It was Clinton's third budget this year and marked another round of White House concessions in an increasingly bitter fight with the Republican Congress. The administration called

it a starting point to break an impasse in budget negotiations.

"There darn better be some movement on the part of the Republican congressional negotiators now," said presidential spokesman Mike McCurry. "If there's not, this will be a very short negotiation, I suspect."

White House chief of staff Leon Panetta presented Clinton's latest offer to GOP budget negotiators on Capitol Hill. "There is not a lot of negotiating room here," Panetta said.

The president coupled his plan with a request for a temporary spending bill to keep the government running until Jan. 26. The existing spending measure expires Dec. 15, threatening another federal shutdown if no budget deal is concluded by then.

Nearly half of the administration's savings — \$64 billion — would come from programs that Clinton does not consider top priorities, such as transportation, housing and interior. The administration did not spell out the impact of those cuts, amounting to a 20 percent reduction over seven years in many programs after taking inflation into account.

Clinton said he would squeeze \$46 billion from welfare spending, \$8 billion more than he proposed in June. There would be

no further cuts in education and environment spending, which Clinton considers crucial.

Another large chunk of the savings, \$32 billion, would come from reducing the Consumer Price Index by 0.2 percent on grounds it overstates inflation.

The adjustment would mean lower cost-of-living increases in benefit programs such as Social Security. If it were in effect in 1996, the change would mean about \$1 a month less for each recipient.

Republicans have proposed a similar adjustment, lessening the political hazard for Clinton. Both sides plan to take cover in a finding by the Bureau of Labor Statistics that the change is economically warranted.

The revision also would mean increased taxes for many Americans — they would wind up in higher tax brackets since more income would be taxable.

Clinton offered his plan one day after vetoing the Republicans balanced-budget plan, complaining it was too extreme.

In his latest plan, Clinton did not take any more money from Medicare or Medicaid, which the Republicans have targeted for \$433 billion in savings. Clinton's plan would keep the spending reductions on those programs at \$98 billion for Medicare and \$54 billion for Medicaid.

The Republican plan vetoed by Clinton contained \$245 billion in tax cuts. The president argued it was targeted for the wealthy at the expense of the middle class. His own version — the same as it was in June — amounts to \$98 billion.

A major point of contention between Clinton and the Republicans concerns how to estimate future economic growth, unemployment and health-care costs. The White House wants to use forecasts by the Office of Management and Budget, which are far rosier than the GOP-preferred calculations by the Congressional Budget Office.

While the difference sounds arcane, it can mean the difference of tens of billions of dollars.

Republicans said Clinton's plan would fall short of a balanced budget. The White House said it would negotiate an "enforcement mechanism" — stand-by spending cuts or revenue increases — in case the plan does not succeed.



Clinton

To: Forestry student met at bonfire who should teach.

INTRODUCTION BY CANDLELIGHT
Individual features, through thousands, shown in the flickering of light.

Words spoken in the energy of the night producing a kind act, drew her closer.

Standing there, as the light danced and darted about her, my eyes failed.

Revealing only parts, pieces, and glimpses of her beauty that the shadows of the night veiled.

She played with children, revealing ever so more about herself.

Her eyes and hair, I noticed as both were exposed from the darkness, by the light.

Actions revealed qualities; kindness, compassion, vitality, and class.

Yet abruptly, with a kind word, she left, leaving me no opportunity.

I sat here, writing this, pondering the question I should've asked that night,

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Jared, Southern Gentleman

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