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## United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6100

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February 17, 2012

The Honorable Jeffrey Zients  
Acting Director  
The Office of Management and Budget  
725 17th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Acting Director Zients:

As a result of your evasive answer to my simple and direct question concerning net spending increases in President Obama's fiscal year 2013 budget, I am following up with you in writing. Fairness and responsible management of the people's money demands an honest answer to my simple question.

So I will ask again as I did at the hearing: does the president's budget cut spending or increase spending over the next 10 years compared to those levels set in current law? In other words, does the president propose to increase or decrease spending levels from those agreed to under the Budget Control Act in August? The president, you, and the White House team have repeatedly talked about the budget achieving \$4 trillion in deficit reduction, primarily from spending cuts. Specifically, you assert to the country two and a half dollars in spending cuts for every one dollar in tax hikes.

So I was shocked when you—the president's budget chief—strenuously resisted answering this fundamental question. Eventually, you responded that the president's budget did, in fact, contain net spending cuts. This response is not only factually incorrect but represents, in my view, a continuing and deliberate obfuscation by the White House. In reality, the president's budget calls for total outlays of \$46,959 billion over a ten-year window—more than the \$44,251 billion in CBO's January baseline, more than the \$45,553 billion set forth in the Budget Control Act, and more than the \$45,952 billion from President Obama's own budget last year.

This is a matter of simple math. New spending in your budget above the August current-law levels, when interest is accounted for, includes repealing the sequester (\$1.2 trillion), adding a second stimulus (\$455 billion), and the "doc fix" payments (\$522 billion). Thus, even if you attempt to claim credit for the discredited war savings budget gimmick, spending increases more than overwhelm the budget's \$600 billion in cuts to mandatory spending. I emphasize the post-August figure because our current law is the product of a negotiation in which Congress and the president agreed to lower the spending trajectory by \$2.1 trillion dollars.

To properly address our fiscal crisis, can't the president's team honestly answer how their budget impacts the spending and debt course we are on? If the president proposes to spend yet even more money than the levels set by the Budget Control Act—which still increases annual spending

year after year—I and the American people need to know. Certainly he cannot pretend spending is cut when the facts show spending increases.

I want to give you an opportunity to correct your statement for the record, and I would like a reply to my question no later than Monday, February 27th. Your response will affect how your performance, and that of the president, will be judged by the American people.

I look forward to a straightforward answer to a straightforward question.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jeff Sessions", with a large, stylized flourish on the left side.

Jeff Sessions