

The rest of the Ryan budget

By [Steve Thorngate](#)

April 28, 2011

A series this week [by Jonathan Cohn](#) takes this point as its premise:

Discussion of the House Republican budget has focused mostly on the privatization of Medicare, the block-granting of Medicaid, and the repeal of the Affordable Care Act. And that's appropriate, given the magnitude of the changes and widespread impact they would have. But those proposals are obscuring some other proposed shifts that, in any other context, would be plenty troubling for their own sake.

The discussion hasn't been *quite* that narrow, at least not among those critical of the GOP budget for 2012: there's been much talk (including [here](#)) about not just the budget's health-insurance program reforms but also the cuts that come with them, the tax breaks for high earners and corporations and the plan's highly imaginative math.

Still, Cohn's right: there are plenty of other provisions in the bill that deserve a dose of public outrage of their own. He's posted on four so far:

- The [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program](#), aka food stamps, gets the Medicaid treatment: it's converted to a state-administered block grant, and its funding is cut. SNAP spending would no longer grow automatically during an economic downturn, a shame given its stellar performance as economic stimulus--to say nothing of all the hungry people who can't find a job.
- Along with replacing Medicare with an underfunded voucher system, the budget [raises the program's eligibility age](#) from 65 to 67. Add to this the repeal of health-care reform--actually just *some* of it, since the Republicans [decided](#) they like a lot of it as long as it has their names on it instead of the president's--and you're left with uninsured and underinsured 65- and 66-year-olds and higher health-insurance costs for everyone.

- The budget [eliminates an important element of the 2010 financial reform bill](#): the federal government's power to take over failing financial mega-firms and dissolve them in an orderly way, as it does with traditional banks that are failing. Republicans have long attacked this provision as "permanent bailout authority" for the government, a powerful line but an odd way to defend a position shared by Wall Street. The real point is to prevent the *need* for a bailout.
- According to an [analysis](#) by Adam Hersch and Sarah Ayres, the budget's deep cuts to public investment include a [37 percent cut from transportation infrastructure](#)--even though our roads, bridges, transit networks and air traffic control systems are already in disrepair.

This week, House Speaker John Boehner [distanced himself](#) from the GOP budget, an odd thing to do after he successfully pushed it through the House. Meanwhile, the Congressional Progressive Caucus released a detailed [rival plan](#) that includes some serious tax hikes. It'll never pass, but that's not the point: the budget negotiations will involve *à la carte* solutions and much compromise. The Progressive Caucus's menu of ideas will help counteract the bad ones detailed above--and its existence will make it harder for the Republicans to take Obama's moderate, pre-compromised approach, paint it as insanely and dangerously liberal and then get him to compromise even further.