

## EDITORIAL: Budget ideas on both sides deserve real debate

President Barack Obama's new \$4 trillion budget plan would triple the current \$1,000 tax credit for child care, calls for a \$500 tax credit for low-income families with two wage earners, a \$1.4 billion launch of a program aimed at letting every "responsible" student in the nation attend community college for free, and major expansions in pre-school programs.

J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE — Associated Press

In submitting his proposed budget Monday, President Barack Obama bemoaned the "mindless austerity" he says is holding back America and hurting the middle class.

Unfortunately, the reaction of the new Republican majority in Congress to the president's spending plan is mindless in its own way — reflexive opposition. By declaring the budget dead on arrival and belittling it as merely the same tired "tax and spend" before any real debate, GOP leaders are not keeping their pledge to govern responsibly.

Having said that, President Obama also needs to lead responsibly. This spring, GOP leaders plan to put forward their own plan for the 2016 budget that takes effect Oct. 1. They say their blueprint will balance the budget, reform the cluttered tax code and address expensive, but popular, entitlements including Medicare and Social Security. Their proposals should be taken seriously by the White House and congressional Democrats.

Yes, some of the GOP hyperbole this week has been part of the gamesmanship in budget negotiations, already more pronounced because of the 2016 presidential race. But haven't voters made clear by now that they're sick and tired of the unproductive partisanship?

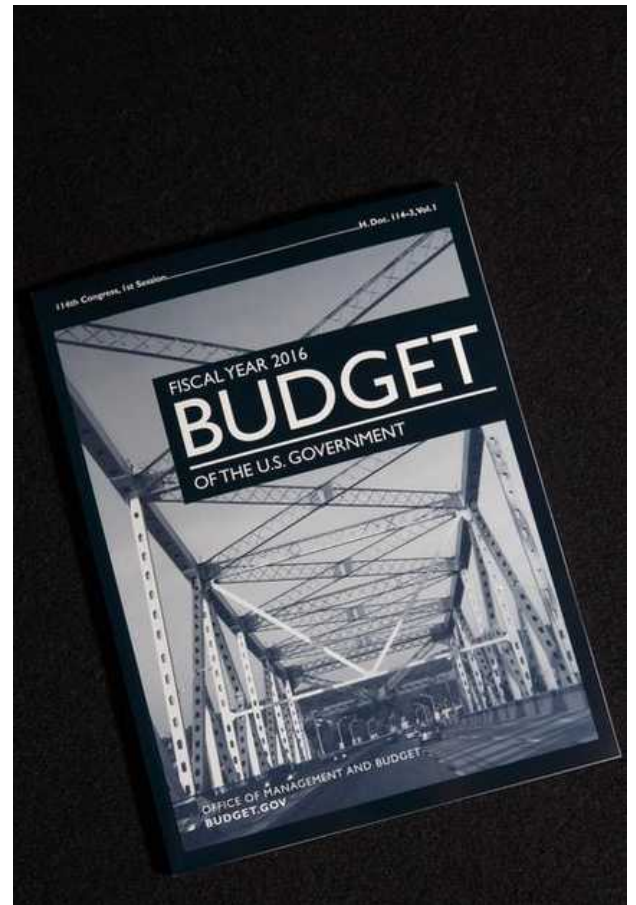
Is it too much to ask for Obama's proposals to be judged on their merits? There are actually some ideas worth strong consideration.

With the economy recovering and federal deficits declining, Obama says it's time to ease the strict limits on both defense and domestic spending put in place in 2011 under "sequestration."

He's right; the real issue is how much to loosen the purse strings. Certainly, the federal government shouldn't go on a wild spending spree. The White House knows it isn't going to get everything it wants in the record \$4 trillion proposal.

Still, there is room for smart, targeted investment, and for boosting the fortunes of the vast majority of Americans, who have not shared in the growing prosperity. Obama proposes tripling the child care tax credit and spending more on early-childhood, science and math education. Tax cuts aimed at the middle class would be paid for with higher taxes on the wealthy and on Wall Street financiers, who have reaped the vast majority of gains from the rising stock market.

The nation's crumbling roads and bridges need repair. U.S. corporations are parking way too much of their profits



abroad to avoid taxes. So paying for a \$478 billion public works program by taxing the estimated \$2 trillion in offshore accounts — and by increasing the gas tax — is an interesting idea. There also is also funding for dam and flood control improvements important to the Valley.

More money to combat the Islamic State, to support Europe against Russian aggression and to strengthen U.S. cybersecurity defenses ought to appeal to both parties. However, the president is right to warn that he won't accept a budget that boosts national security at the expense of domestic programs.

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