

July 27, 2017

Dear Members of Congress,

On behalf of the over 170 organizations who are a part of the Clean Budget Coalition, we urge you to oppose the “minibus” appropriations bill which packages together the Defense, Military Construction and Veterans’ Affairs, Legislative Branch, and Energy and Water funding bills.

Appropriations bills continue to be misused to undermine essential safeguards through ideological “policy riders” – provisions that address extraneous and unpopular policy issues. Slipping unrelated and damaging issues into must-pass appropriations bills to win approval is a dangerous strategy for the public.

Ideological riders are measures that the public opposes and would be unpopular to move as standalone legislation. The American people support policies to restrain Wall Street abuses and ensure safe and healthy food and products, to protect our air, land, water and wildlife, to ensure safe and fair workplaces, to prevent consumer rip-offs and corporate wrongdoing, to create fair rules of the road for our campaign finance system, to provide access to justice and fair housing, and to ensure continued access to vital health care services including reproductive health care.

Contentious poison pill riders are intended to advance the priorities of special interest donors and supporters. These riders have no business in the proposed “defense” minibus. In fact, this bill creates a new level of damaging riders by adding in a controversial rider to provide funding for a border wall that is unrelated to any of the four bills into the language. In addition, there are numerous other poison pill policy riders included that would damage our environment and our water, like allowing the Army Corp to exempt certain fill material from protections granted under the Clean Water Act, halting the implementation of the commonsense and bipartisan National Ocean Policy, and circumventing the longstanding legal process to repeal the Clean Water Rule, among others.

Additionally, Congress should not craft funding bills that unilaterally violate the Budget Control Act (BCA) and the parity principle. In this case, defense is increased far above the cap while non-defense discretionary (NDD) spending is severely underfunded. In fact, passing this bill will not promote American security; rather it charts a direct course for deep cuts to the military. The defense funding levels would trigger sequestration in January of 2018, requiring cuts of \$72 billion.

Further, dramatically increasing only defense funding endangers investments in essential public services. This is evidenced by House Appropriations bills’ deep cuts of \$5 billion below the current non-defense caps and \$22 billion in inflation-adjusted cuts that harm labor, health, human services, education, housing, transportation and other important non-veterans programs. Instead of reaching a bipartisan agreement as called for by many members of Congress, this bill makes it harder to address urgent needs in other non-defense programs.

A budget deal remains the most likely path toward enactment of appropriation bills that responsibly meet the nation’s national security commitments and domestic needs. The Clean Budget Coalition urges Congress to focus attention on a clean budget solution that provides commensurate increases for both defense and non-defense funding without attaching harmful ideological policy riders. This is the best way to avoid a fall budget showdown that would leave defense and all government programs, including state and local governments, in the lurch with considerable budget uncertainty and the threat of deep and damaging cuts.

It’s time to address the most basic of Congressional responsibilities, which means passing clean funding bills in a timely manner under regular order.

Sincerely,

Clean Budget Coalition