

July 30, 2018

Coalition Urges Milcon Conferees Not to Bust Spending Caps

To: Conference Chair Senator Alexander
Senate Appropriations Chair Senator Shelby
Senate Appropriations Ranking Member Leahy
House Appropriations Chair Representative Frelinghuysen
House Appropriations Ranking Member Lowey

The undersigned organizations, on behalf of millions of Americans, write to urge conferees to H.R. 5895, the Fiscal Year 2019 Energy and Water and Military Construction/Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act (or "Minibus"), to reject any attempt to increase discretionary spending above the caps agreed to by Congress only five months ago.

As reported by Senate and House Appropriations Committees, the underlying text of H.R. 5895 did not contain funding for the "VA Mission Act," aimed at improving veteran healthcare and signed into law only a day before the House took up its VA funding bill. We are concerned that some lawmakers have made no secret of their desire to completely exempt additional spending for the VA Mission Act from the still-in-force budget caps by putting this funding off-budget, or to increase the already amended caps.

The budget request made by the Administration for FY19 funding accommodated these VA reforms without exceeding the budget caps. This demonstrates that if Members of Congress are willing to accept tradeoffs and reprioritize spending, it is unnecessary to resort to budget gimmicks or increased spending.

If conferees pursue a course of action that includes this increased spending, without reductions elsewhere, this puts pressure on other discretionary appropriations - many of which have already crossed the House floor - to relieve the pressure or risk violating the budget caps. In the same way, exempting this spending from the caps would further undermine the goals of fiscal restraint and accountability.

The Congressional Budget Office predicts that deficits could soar above \$1 trillion by 2020, only a year and a half away. As we move further into a growing fiscal crisis, we urge Congress to reject any appropriations that exceed the budget caps or further erode this accountability tool.

Sincerely,

Brandon Arnold, Executive Vice President
National Taxpayers Union

Dan Caldwell, Executive Director
Concerned Veterans for America

Brent Wm. Gardner, Chief Government Affairs Officer
Americans for Prosperity

Tim Chapman, Executive Director
Heritage Action for America



Adam Brandon, President
FreedomWorks

Norm Singleton, President
Campaign for Liberty

Andrew F. Quinlan, President
Center for Freedom and Prosperity

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Coalition to Reduce Spending

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Free the People

Heather R. Higgins, President & CEO
Independent Women's Voice

Ryan Alexander, President
Taxpayers for Common Sense

David Williams, President
Taxpayers Protection Alliance

CC: Members of Congress

