



May 9, 2019

NTU urges all Representatives to vote “NO” on H.R. 2157, the “Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2019.” This legislation would provide approximately \$17.2 billion in un-offset funding in response to various natural disasters that occurred in 2018 and early 2019. Its enactment would add significantly to our national debt crisis while leaving underlying issues unresolved.

One of the biggest challenges facing the 116th Congress is how to resolve our growing spending crisis. According to the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), our annual deficit will soon top \$1 trillion, interest payments on our debt have become the fastest-growing part of the federal budget, and the national debt is now above \$22 trillion. For those reasons, it’s essential that emergency funding is offset with commensurate cuts or budgetary shifts elsewhere. In the case of disaster spending, redirecting funds from the federal Disaster Relief Fund, which boasted a \$27 billion surplus in its end of year report (even accounting for anticipated FY19 obligations), would be an appropriate response.

Just as troubling is how this legislation would spend finite taxpayer funds. For example, the bill would provide \$3.5 billion to agri-businesses, who recently secured an \$867 billion farm bill on the basis that it would help avoid future disaster supplementals and assist farmers affected by 2018 events, and who benefited from billions of dollars in “trade mitigation” payments. The nonpartisan Taxpayers for Common Sense found these funds can be used by farms to pay for past AND future crop insurance premiums (of which taxpayers already directly subsidize more than sixty percent of the cost) rather than restitution for losses, to pay for up to seventy percent of a loss where a farm did not bother to purchase crop insurance, and to expand payments to new beneficiaries such as timber (a crop already facing massive losses due to overproduction), poultry, livestock, and dairy.

Concerningly, only about 30 percent of the appropriated funds intended for emergency disaster relief will be spent in 2019. H.R. 2157 rewards poor risk management, expands the role of the federal government (many line-items are at full federal expense, rather than a more appropriate cost-sharing model), and increases the burden on taxpayers. Instead of an annual ad hoc approach, lawmakers should prioritize reforms that would better plan for and insure against the inevitable. This “buy-now, pay-later” model for disaster response fails both taxpayers and the communities affected.

Roll call votes on H.R. 2157 will be included in NTU’s annual Rating of Congress and a “NO” vote will be considered the pro-taxpayer position. NTU further urges all Representatives to vote “NO” on any amendments that would increase spending.

If you have any questions, please contact NTU Policy and Government Affairs Associate Thomas Aiello at (631) 697-4840
