



July 20, 2020

NTU urges all Representatives to vote “NO” on H.R. 6395, the William M. (Mac) Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021. After spending \$3 trillion on emergency relief measures in the past four months, lawmakers should take the time to reevaluate waste and inefficiency across the FY 2021 budget. Instead, H.R. 6395 would authorize nearly \$750 billion to an already bloated Pentagon budget, including \$69 billion to the Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) slush fund. Congress should reject this legislation, and pursue a defense policy bill with lower topline spending levels.

Even after the Bipartisan Budget Act (BBA) of 2019 authorized both defense and non-defense spending at irresponsible levels for fiscal years (FYs) 2020 and 2021, Congress had an opportunity to right-size the Pentagon budget with the FY 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). Unfortunately, H.R. 6395 misses the mark in many ways. The bill authorizes nearly three quarters of a trillion dollars to the defense budget, at a time when American taxpayers are facing record amounts of debt and deficits. As Congress looks to appropriate further taxpayers dollars to fight COVID-19, lawmakers in both chambers need to seriously re-examine the priorities and topline spending levels in the annual Pentagon budget. H.R. 6395 makes no serious effort to do so.

Nearly ten percent of the spending authorized by H.R. 6395 goes to the Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) account, which lawmakers across the ideological spectrum have long derided as a slush fund. Based on the Pentagon’s own budget request for FY 2021, we can expect the overwhelming majority of OCO funding to go towards base and enduring requirements, rather than actual contingency operations needs. While we are disappointed that several amendments intended to rein in OCO spending were not made in order, Congress does have the opportunity to improve Pentagon reporting on OCO spending and to identify waste and fraud in OCO contracting by passing amendments #84 (Norman and Schrader) and #157 (Lynch and Hice).

Representatives who care about our debt and deficits should tackle waste and inefficiency in all areas of the federal budget, and the Pentagon budget is no exception. NTU strongly urges Representatives to oppose H.R. 6395 in its current form and work to improve the underlying bill by adopting fiscally responsible amendments.

Roll call votes on H.R. 6395 will be significantly weighed in NTU’s annual Rating of Congress and a “NO” vote will be considered the pro-taxpayer position.

If you have any questions, please contact NTU Policy and Government Affairs Manager Andrew Lautz at alautz@ntu.org.
