



July 22, 2020

NTU urges all Representatives to vote “NO” on H.R. 7608, the first minibuss package of four appropriations bills for the Departments of State, Agriculture, Interior, and Veterans Affairs. 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. H.R. 7608 fails to adhere to fiscal discipline and inches the U.S. closer to fiscal peril.

Due to persistently large deficits and the economic shock of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Congressional Budget Office projects the federal debt to be 101 percent of GDP by the end of the fiscal year. If the United States is to avoid fiscal and economic crisis, Congress must enact serious reforms to balance the budget. Instead of reversing this worrying trend, H.R. 7608 exacerbates Washington’s loose spending habits by increasing spending by more than 10 percent, bringing the total cost of this spending package to \$260 billion for FY21. It is fiscally irresponsible to increase spending 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 at all departments.

At nearly \$26 billion over current spending levels, H.R. 7608 misses a prime opportunity to enact bipartisan spending reforms. Under this package, programs that have a long history of being ineffective or unnecessary are rewarded with more funding authority, like doubling funding for rural broadband, more funding for federal arts and humanities programs, more spending for foreign aid programs, and new money for the Overseas Contingency Operations, often decried as a slush fund for the Pentagon. To make matters worse, H.R. 7608 shifts the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) allocations from discretionary to mandatory appropriations.

Representatives should be focused on efforts to save taxpayers money through making government more efficient. To that end, we encourage lawmakers to oppose H.R. 7608 and look for opportunities to reduce spending.

Roll call votes on H.R. 7608 will be included 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 Thomas Aiello at Thomas.Aiello@ntu.org