



December 4, 2020

NTU urges all Senators and Representatives to vote “NO” on H.R. 6395, the William M. (Mac) Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). H.R. 6395 would authorize nearly \$750 billion for an already bloated Pentagon budget, including \$69 billion to the Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) slush fund. The legislation includes some important transparency and oversight initiatives, but any gains for taxpayers are limited by multiple steps in the wrong direction. Congress should reject this legislation, and work toward a bill with lower topline levels and better oversight provisions.

Congress has appropriated trillions of dollars to fight the public health and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. While some level of federal support for struggling families and businesses was necessary and remains so, Congress will need to spend years after this crisis getting its fiscal house in order. Lawmakers can take a step in the right direction before the 116th Congress is over, by refusing to pass yet another NDAA that authorizes an increase in taxpayer dollars for an already-bloated defense budget.

Providing for the national defense is one of the federal government’s most important responsibilities, and we do not advocate for a ‘slash and burn’ approach to the Pentagon budget. With the national debt at \$27 trillion and counting, though, every corner of mandatory and discretionary spending must be on the table as Congress considers how to dig out from record debt and deficit levels. Lawmakers from both parties must tackle not only waste, fraud, and abuse at DoD, but also legacy defense programs that have outlived their utility. To that end, NTU [has suggested](#) reforms and cuts to the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, Littoral Combat Ship, and Navy frigate programs. [Other experts](#) have suggested reevaluating “the utility of extended peacetime presence missions” and minimizing “redundancies” between the services. And many stakeholders across the political and ideological spectra have recommended [reforming and reducing](#) (or eliminating) the OCO account -- a slush fund that lately has only encouraged bloat and put off hard decisions at DoD.

Unfortunately, the FY 2021 NDAA accomplishes few to none of these aims. While the conference version of the legislation retains some valuable transparency and oversight initiatives supported by NTU and other civil society organizations, these gains are limited by other steps back for transparency, such as the elimination of the Chief Management Officer position at the Pentagon. On the whole, this version of the NDAA is bad for taxpayers and government watchdogs. We urge lawmakers to reject this legislation.

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.
