



December 21, 2022

NTU urges all Representatives and Senators to vote “NO” on H.R. 2617, the vehicle for the FY 2023 omnibus appropriations bill. According to our best estimates, this legislation increases discretionary spending by \$135 billion (9.2 percent) above FY 2022 spending levels and does not contain budgetary offsets. It also commits \$83 billion to emergency appropriations that are also not paid for with spending offsets in the regular budget. Finally, we are troubled that this bill was negotiated among a few senior lawmakers in secret, and released to the public just days before a final vote. Congress should commit to regular order for FY 2024 appropriations bills next year.

The FY 2023 omnibus appropriations bill continues the Congressional tradition of increasing both defense and non-defense discretionary spending levels far above the previous fiscal year, a practice that has been supercharged in the two years since the Budget Control Act of 2011 (and its spending caps) expired. H.R. 2617 appropriates \$135 billion (or 9.2 percent) above FY 2022 spending levels, and contains no budgetary offsets. While there have been many inconsistencies in the spending figures released by various appropriations committees and subcommittees, we estimate defense increases from last year total around \$76 billion, or 9.7 percent, while non-defense increases from last year total around \$59 billion, or 8.5 percent. Not only will this legislation add to deficits and debt this year, but it will worsen the nation’s fiscal outlook in future years by setting a new, higher baseline for discretionary appropriations in FY 2024 and beyond. Lawmakers should be reducing discretionary spending across the board, in defense and non-defense categories, rather than increasing appropriations.

The FY 2023 omnibus also commits \$83 billion to emergency appropriations. Many of the initiatives funded by these emergency appropriations are, indeed, urgent needs that are noble for taxpayers to fund. However, it has long been NTU’s position that Congress should offset even emergency spending. Lawmakers even missed an easy opportunity to offset some of this spending by kicking across-the-board mandatory spending cuts required by the Statutory PAYGO Act of 2010 – and scheduled to go into effect in January 2023 – all the way to 2025.

Finally, we would be remiss if we did not reiterate our strong concerns with a fundamentally broken Congressional budget process, on display for this omnibus spending bill. A select group of senior lawmakers negotiated this deal in secret for weeks, and appropriators have shared text with other lawmakers and the general public just days before scheduled votes. The hundreds of lawmakers not in the room for these negotiations deserve better, and so do American taxpayers. Congress should return to regular order for FY 2024 appropriations legislation in 2023.

Roll call votes on H.R. 2617 will be significantly weighted 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 Director of Federal Policy Andrew Lantz at alantz@ntu.org.
