

July 18, 2012

An Open Letter to Congress in Support of Reining in Runaway Spending by the Pentagon

Dear Members of the House of Representatives,

We, the undersigned organizations, strongly urge you to support the bipartisan amendment to freeze profligate Pentagon spending at Fiscal Year 2012 levels. Offered by Representatives Mick Mulvaney (R-SC) and Barney Frank (D-MA), this proposed amendment to the Defense Appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2013 is a common-sense step towards reining in the runaway Pentagon budget.

Though our groups have advocated for deeper cuts, we welcome the Mulvaney-Frank amendment to keep base military spending at the FY 2012 level of \$518 billion. It is a modest \$1.1 billion reduction of the currently proposed spending in the House bill—which inexplicably provides for \$3.1 billion *more* than requested by the military. Keeping spending at current levels will still be higher than the Pentagon’s requested amount, but will at least halt the unnecessary escalation currently proposed and is the same level that nearly 300 members recently supported in the “megabus.” The amendment excludes spending on military personnel, the Defense Health Program, and the overseas contingency operations from the freeze. It allows the commanding officers to make strategic spending decisions.

The Mulvaney-Frank amendment represents a compromise that both Republicans and Democrats can agree on.

In fact, the House has already agreed to greater reductions to the Pentagon budget. Just last year, Congress passed the Budget Control Act to enforce discretionary spending caps.

On Tuesday the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) released findings that the Department of Defense (DoD) budget request would exceed by \$14 billion the FY 2013 and by \$508 billion the FY 2013-21 spending caps set by the bipartisan deficit reduction law—not including sequestration, which requires \$66 billion less than requested for FY 2013. However, according to CBO:

Accommodating those reductions, in particular, could be difficult for the department to manage because it would have to be done over only nine months. Even with that cut, however, DoD’s base budget in 2013 would still be larger than it was in 2006 (in 2013 dollars) and larger than the average base budget during the 1980s.

Right now, the House defense appropriations bill is \$17.1 billion over the baseline spending caps. Congress must reverse its current backpedaling on the restraint they mandated last year.

It is important to put all the political wrangling in context of the American public's support for even deeper cuts. According to a recent Stimson Center poll, American citizens favor an 18 percent cut, or a \$103.5 billion reduction. What's more, the Stimson Center found that even when defense spending benefits their districts, voters were still willing to cut such spending. Indeed, our organizations with diverse ideologies and interests urge you to take action to ensure better fiscal stewardship at the Pentagon.

We urge you to hold strong on the commitments you have already made to fiscal responsibility and pare down the bloated Pentagon budget. Supporting the Mulvaney-Frank Amendment is a step towards doing so—but more cuts are needed. In today's constrained economic climate, taxpayers cannot afford to throw precious resources away on unneeded or outmoded strategies for national security. Congress should begin to end wasteful spending and make smarter choices now.

Sincerely,

Campaign for America's Future
Center for International Policy
Center for Media and Democracy
CODEPINK
CREDO Action
Council for a Livable World
Foreign Policy in Focus
Global Exchange
Just Foreign Policy
Ladies of Liberty Alliance
Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office
National Taxpayers Union
New Jersey Peace Action
Peace Action
Peace Action New York State
Peace Action West
Project On Government Oversight (POGO)
Rio Grande Foundation
Taxpayers for Common Sense
Taxpayers Protection Alliance
Tea Party WDC
Tri-Valley CAREs
United for Peace and Justice
USAction
WAND