



June 11, 2015

OPPOSE FY 2016 DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS BILL

Dear Representative:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 200 national organizations to promote and protect the rights of all persons in the United States, we write to express our strong opposition to the Fiscal Year 2016 Defense Appropriations bill (H.R. 2685). The House proposal does not treat defense and non-defense discretionary spending equitably, and permits riders that undermine consideration of appropriations legislation under regular order. We urge you and your colleagues to reject it.

The Leadership Conference believes that proponents of increased military spending who oppose increasing the caps on non-defense discretionary spending have used the Overseas Contingency Fund (OCO) in this year's FY 2016 Defense Appropriations bill as a cynical workaround to the caps on defense spending. In conjunction with other House Appropriations bills that have kept the caps on non-defense discretionary funding firmly in place, this is a violation of the principle of parity between defense and non-defense discretionary spending that was a primary guideline of the Budget Control Act of 2011.

It is simply unacceptable to retain the draconian cuts to non-defense discretionary funding under the sequester while using budget gimmickry in the form of OCO to provide a "slush fund" for military spending. The Leadership Conference believes that the diverse communities we represent, many of them low-income, deserve better than to have the budget "balanced" on their collective backs in the name of austerity measures that H.R. 2685 would have only apply to non-defense discretionary funding.

We must also note that we are opposed to the inclusion of riders in the appropriations process. Much to our concern, the FY 2016 Defense Appropriations bill permits riders, many of which are extremely ideological in nature. The appropriations process should not be the forum for riders, and we would urge a return to regular order.

We are deeply troubled by H.R. 2685 and the budget gimmickry OCO represents. Our nation deserves a budget that meets the needs of all Americans, and we remain hopeful that as in years past, a compromise can be reached in the months ahead. We urge both parties to come together to discuss a fiscally responsible way to proceed on a two-year funding deal as soon as possible.

For these reasons, we oppose the funding allocations set out by the FY 2016 Defense Appropriations bill and urge you to oppose it. Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please contact Emily Chatterjee, Senior Counsel at (202) 466-3648.

Sincerely,

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June 11, 2015
Page 2 of 2



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