Dear Senator:

As you consider S. 2943, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year (FY) 2017, we write to urge you to oppose authorizing funds for the Pentagon and related agencies above the amount agreed to in the 2015 Bipartisan Budget Act (BBA). As you know, that law set a cap on spending at $551.1 billion and the parties agreed that an additional $58.8 billion would be designated as Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) for the Pentagon. We strongly oppose increasing the Pentagon budget topline for a number of reasons:

- **Increasing the Pentagon topline leads to budget uncertainty by breaking the 2015 BBA.** The 2015 agreement was a carefully balanced bipartisan agreement that provided certainty to the Pentagon and other government agencies. Reneging on the 2015 BBA will create uncertainty and confusion in future Pentagon budgets. Even if an extra $17 billion were provided through OCO, that spending breaks the spirit of the BBA, if not the letter, which could threaten the delicate compromise. Pentagon planners expected two years of budget clarity; undermining that certainty jeopardizes national security.

- **The Pentagon’s budget remains historically high.** Current levels of Pentagon spending are already higher than at most times in modern history even though war-spending is down. Adjusted for inflation, current national security spending is higher than peak national security spending during the Reagan Administration, the Vietnam War, and the Korean War. Compared to periods of war, it is clear that only a fraction of overall Pentagon spending is going toward actual war-fighting in Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, and other conflict zones. For instance, spending directly related to the anti-Islamic State missions in Syria and Iraq has cost $7.2 billion as of April 15, 2016.¹

- **Throwing money at the Pentagon created the problems it faces today.** Advocates of increasing the Pentagon’s bloated budget point to an array of problems, from training challenges to aging equipment, yet these very problems are themselves the result of more than a decade of trying to buy new weapons that the Pentagon does not need or cannot afford, while cutting operations and maintenance funds and avoiding making tough choices. One recent study shows that Pentagon wasted $59 billion in failed acquisition programs

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during the 2000s\(^2\), the consequence of investing in weapons systems that did not work, were unsustainable, or had no relevant use in the modern security environment. We cannot fix the Pentagon waste problems by throwing more money at it.

Earlier this year, our coalition argued that the Pentagon could find $38.6 billion in savings in FY 2017 (see enclosed), largely by forgoing procurement of excessive and unnecessary weapons systems. In light of this, it is particularly disappointing to see an amendment suggesting that even more money should be thrown at the Pentagon budget. Again, we urge you to oppose any measures offered in FY 2017 NDAA that would increase money for the topline.

Sincerely,

Center for International Policy
Coalition to Reduce Spending
Council for a Livable World
Downsize DC
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW)
Just Foreign Policy
London Center
National Priorities Project
National Taxpayers Union
Niskanen Center
Peace Action
Project on Government Oversight
Taxpayers for Common Sense
Taxpayers Protection Alliance
US Labor Against the War
Win Without War
Women's Action for New Directions

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