September 21, 2020

The Honorable James Inhofe  The Honorable Jack Reed
Chairman  Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Armed Services  Senate Committee on Armed Services

The Honorable Adam Smith  The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Chairman  Ranking Member
House Committee on Armed Services  House Committee on Armed Services

Dear Chairmen Inhofe and Smith and Ranking Members Reed and Thornberry:

The Power of the Purse Coalition, an ideologically diverse group of organizations all concerned with Congress’s rightful constitutional role in federal tax and spending decisions, and the Data Coalition, America's premier voice on data policy, write to urge you to include the Taxpayers Right-to-Know Act¹ in the final version of the FY21 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). The bill was passed via voice vote and with strong bipartisan support out of the House of Representatives earlier this year and was successfully offered by Representatives Cooper (D-TN), Wahlberg (R-MI), and Comer (R-KY) as an amendment to the House's version of the NDAA in July.

The Taxpayers Right-to-Know Act is commonsense legislation that would require the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to create and make available to the public a federal program inventory. Such an inventory, which is long overdue, would allow both Congress and the general public to know exactly what the federal government is doing with taxpayer dollars and for what specific purposes. This is essential information in our democracy, which relies on an informed citizenry and responsible government stewardship of scarce public resources.

Congress cannot make good decisions without good information. Our respective coalitions operate with this aphorism as a fundamental guiding principle. Creating a comprehensive and publicly accessible federal program inventory is a critical first step toward ensuring that Congress and the public have the information we need to debate

and make good decisions on important policy issues. We strongly encourage you to include Section 1770 of the House’s version of the NDAA in the final package.

Sincerely,

Data Coalition
Demand Progress
FreedomWorks
National Taxpayers Union
Project On Government Oversight
Protect Democracy
R Street Institute