

Draft Date: 10/24/2017

Dear Senators McConnell and Schumer and Representatives Ryan and Pelosi:

We write as communities of faith to offer our support and encouragement as Congress works to find common ground on a budget that meets the needs of our country. Your choices over the coming weeks will profoundly affect our faith communities and the nation as a whole. As you discern these choices, we urge you to draw on the basic common faith values of human dignity, healthy relationships, participation, restoration, and sustainability.

We are particularly concerned about budget proposals that would grow Pentagon spending to even higher levels. After adjusting for inflation, our country already is spending more on defense through combined base and Overseas Contingency Operations funding than at the height of the Vietnam War or the last days of the Cold War. Congress is at the same time failing to hold the Pentagon fully accountable for how it spends taxpayers' hard-earned dollars: it remains the only cabinet agency yet to comply with Congress's decades-old mandate to pass a clean financial audit. Congress is considering whether to extract billions more for the Pentagon from American taxpayers, but when an internal study examined the Pentagon's business practices, it found an untapped potential for as much as \$125 billion in savings over five years.

Each additional taxpayer dollar that Congress chooses to spend on the Pentagon risks diverting vitally needed funds away from both local communities and effective overseas violence prevention efforts. Prioritizing funding for everything and anything the Pentagon wants threatens to leave little or nothing for programs that aim to keep everyone in our society healthy, fed, and housed, with roads, infrastructure, and jobs that make our communities whole. As you make choices about federal spending, we urge you to prioritize people and the programs that serve them.

Budget choices reveal where real priorities lie. As communities of faith, we do not accept that choosing to spend almost \$700 billion on the Pentagon while also leaving all other discretionary spending below \$550 billion reflects the priorities of our nation. We urge you to support a budget agreement that rejects increases to Pentagon spending or that forces cuts in diplomacy, peacebuilding, development, and human needs.

Sincerely,

Diane Randall, Executive Secretary, Friends Committee on National Legislation