

Coalition to Congress: Increase Accountability, Stop Funding Unauthorized Programs

March 14, 2016

Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Chair, House Republican Conference
203 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair McMorris Rodgers:

On behalf of the millions of members and supporters of our organizations, we write in support of the Unauthorized Spending Accountability (USA) Act of 2016.

Your legislation is needed to force Congress to better exercise its power of the purse by requiring the periodic authorization of federal programs. According to the Congressional Budget Office, in fiscal year (FY) 2016, Congress appropriated \$310.4 billion to 256 programs and activities that are no longer authorized. That equates to roughly one-quarter of the discretionary budget and more than half of the non-defense discretionary budget.

These programs are funded each year without sufficient oversight and accountability. The USA Act would provide an incentive for committees to take charge of the expenditures within their jurisdiction by subjecting unauthorized programs to automatic spending reductions of 10 percent in the first year and 15 percent in each of the following two years, after which they would be completely sunset.

Congress is already required to authorize programs before appropriating funds. However, due to widespread and longstanding waivers of this rule, the two oldest unauthorized programs date back to the 95th and 96th Congress, and they received a total of \$461 million in FY 2016. The evidence is clear that this practice must cease, and the USA Act will help to achieve that objective.

While discretionary spending must be scrutinized and programs must be held accountable for their results, nearly two-thirds of the federal budget is comprised of mandatory spending. For this reason, the USA Act would wisely create a Spending Accountability Commission that would conduct comprehensive reviews of federal programs funded by mandatory spending. And, in the event Congress cannot agree on whether an unauthorized program should continue, the commission could propose reductions in mandatory spending to offset any unauthorized program remaining on the books. This mechanism would provide Congress with additional flexibility as it seeks to improve the effectiveness of government spending.

Again, we commend you on your thoughtful approach to increasing accountability, which will result in reducing unnecessary federal spending. Our organizations are pleased to endorse the USA Act, and we hope all Members of Congress will join you in working toward its swift passage.

Sincerely,



C O U N C I L F O R



AMERICAN COMMITMENT



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