

April 26, 2017

Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers  
Chair, House Republican Conference  
B-245 Rayburn 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.

Your legislation would help empower 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.

Regardless of the merits of these programs, it is undeniable that they are being funded without sufficient oversight and accountability. The USA Act would create a mechanism that forces congressional committees to take charge of the expenditures within their jurisdiction. After the enactment of this bill, unauthorized programs would see their budgets reduced by 10 percent in the first year, and 15 percent in each of the following two years, after which they would be completely sunset. These spending reductions would be applied to the overall federal discretionary budget.

Congress is already required by rule 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 USA Act would help end the longstanding neglect of the authorization process.

Your legislation also includes important accountability measures that pertain to mandatory spending, which comprises nearly two-thirds of the federal budget. It would create a Spending Accountability Commission tasked with conducting comprehensive reviews of federal programs funded by mandatory spending. 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 programs 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,

Brandon Arnold, Executive Vice President  
National Taxpayers Union

James L. Martin, Founder/Chairman  
60 Plus Association



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