



March 14, 2016

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

Dear Madam Chair,

On behalf of the National Center for Policy Analysis (NCPA), I am writing to express our support for your efforts to restrict appropriations for unauthorized programs. The NCPA is a non-profit, nonpartisan public policy research organization dedicated to developing and promoting private alternatives to government regulation and control. We do not endorse specific pieces of legislation. Nevertheless, we strongly support the objectives contained within your Unauthorized Spending Accountability Act.

When Congress appropriates taxpayer dollars for unauthorized programs, it is a failure of Congressional oversight responsibilities. Frankly, we believe that Congress should handle taxpayer dollars more carefully to avoid the type of waste and abuse that we have sadly seen from federal spending programs over the years. Your bill would create incentives for Congress to carefully examine federal spending through the authorization process before an appropriation is made.

The House Armed Services Committee is a good model of frequent oversight as they reauthorize the nation's military programs every year. Perhaps every federal program doesn't need to be reauthorized every year, but the same sort of frequent review—whether every year, or every five years, or somewhere in between—is necessary if Congress is going to provide the type of scrutiny and oversight that is needed. It is what Americans expect Congress to do with the hard-earned tax dollars they send to Washington.

As you move forward with this worthwhile idea, allow me to offer two ideas that will improve your efforts:

1. The Rules of the House of Representatives (clause 2(a)(1) of rule XXI) already prohibit appropriations for unauthorized programs. In other words, regular order *already* requires programs to be authorized before they receive appropriations. Yet the House Rules Committee routinely waives that rule for

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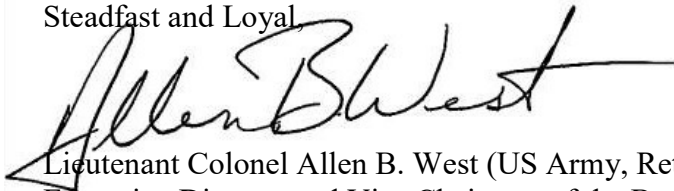
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appropriations bills. As part of the House Republican Article I Task Force initiative, and your overall efforts to return to regular order, why not simply enforce rule XXI? This action could be taken immediately, instead of waiting for your legislation to be passed and signed by the President (an unlikely outcome, in spite of the worthwhile objectives). And it has the added benefit of sending an immediate and clear signal to the President that Congress can exercise its Article I appropriation authority without any need for the President to sign a law or otherwise cooperate.

2. Your legislation would create a new Spending Accountability Commission to examine unauthorized programs. This is a basic duplication of work that the authorizing committees should already be doing. Instead of allocating new funds for this new commission, I suggest cutting the existing budgets of the authorizing committees and using the savings to fund this new commission. This would create a strong incentive for the authorizing committees to do their work, or risk losing their funding to a commission that will do their work for them.

This is a critical time for our nation. The upcoming elections, like all elections, pose an opportunity for the American people to voice their concerns about the failures of Congress to perform basic duties, like oversight and program authorization. Your leadership is much appreciated.

Steadfast and Loyal

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Allen B. West". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Lieutenant Colonel Allen B. West (US Army, Ret)
Executive Director and Vice Chairman of the Board
National Center for Policy Analysis