



December 18, 2019

Key Vote NO on the Consolidated Appropriations Act (House Amendment to Senate Amendment to H.R. 1158) and the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act (House Amendment to Senate Amendment to H.R. 1865)

On behalf of our activist community, I urge you to contact your senators and ask them to vote NO on the Consolidated Appropriations Act (House Amendment to Senate Amendment to H.R. 1158) and the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act (House Amendment to Senate Amendment to H.R. 1865), both of which fund the government for Fiscal Year 2020. These two spending monstrosities, which amount to a staggering 2,313 pages and approximately \$1.4 trillion in spending between them, represent nothing more than a worsening of the swamp culture and the spending addiction in Washington, combined with atrocious processes for “governing” by our nation’s “leadership.”

Both megabuses, as we are referring to them, were released to review at 4:44 PM on Monday and were voted on by the House at around 2:00 PM the next day, approximately 21 hours following the time they were made available. One individual attempting to read these disasters would have to read almost two pages per minute for the entire 21 hours straight from the minute they were released up until the House vote to even get through the two bills, let alone understand them well enough to have any meaningful insight on the impact they would have on our nation.

Needless to say, not a single member of the House was able to read these bills by the time that leadership forced its members to take a stance on it. It is almost as if those writing these bills do not actually want members to know what is in them. Bills, especially of this magnitude, that are forced through such an abysmal process should not become law.

As is par for the course, leadership has chosen once again to govern by crisis and jam these votes

into one of the busiest weeks in Congress -- largely due to other failures of governing -- to either pass a spending measure or face a government shutdown going into the holiday. As the current continuing resolution to fund the government into Fiscal Year 2020 expires on Friday, leaders have once again put their members in the worst possible position to do their actual jobs -- representing their constituents -- by making it impossible for the bills to be read or fully understood by both chambers of Congress ahead of votes.

Aside from the process, should these bills have come out months before a vote and with the input of more members than just the certain chosen few allowed into such negotiations, they would still be atrocities worthy of nobody's vote. The first megabus includes appropriations for Defense, CJS, FSGG, and DHS and the second megabus covers the rest of the government, being Labor-HHS, Agriculture, Energy and Water, Interior, Legislative Branch, MilConVA, SFOPS, and THUD. The latter bill also includes a repulsive number of "riders," meaning additional legislation added to the package that has nothing to do with funding the government.

Together, the bills total nearly \$1.4 trillion in spending that flies far above the caps that Congress set for itself less than a decade ago meant to at least restrain spending. This has been continually ignored and voted away by members too afraid to practice the fiscal responsibility they preach and sell to voters on the campaign trail. Many of those same members will unfortunately vote for these packages as well.

As we have now surpassed \$23 trillion in national debt, there is already a mounting price to pay for Washington's reckless fiscal "policy," if it can be called that. The "policy" of both parties seems to be simply spending more and more without regard to the debt drag that this creates in our economy, let alone the fiscal crisis that slowly but surely will consume our country should we continue down this path.

Even further aside from both the process and the spending levels, many of the programs funded in the bills are flatly unconstitutional and many of the policy riders have no business being in a bill meant to fund the government. However, they are often added to sweeten the deal to more or less buy members' votes for the legislation. One such example of this is a provision that uses federal law to raise the minimum age of sale of tobacco products to 21 years old.

Regardless of the policy, this is such a dramatic change to our country that it is objectively controversial and as such, should at the very least have its own debate and vote separate from a swampy, "must-pass" spending bill. None of this language, or anything similar to it, has been marked up in either the House or the Senate.

Additionally, policy riders such as extensions of the defunct National Flood Insurance Program

and the crony Export-Import Bank, which conservatives largely oppose extensions of on their own, are included in the bill for nearly one year and a whopping seven years, respectively. There was also a tax extenders package added to the legislation overnight before the House vote.

When President Trump signed a similar omnibus spending bill in March 2018, he said: “But I say to Congress: I will never sign another bill like this again. I’m not going to do it again. Nobody read it. It’s only hours old. Some people don’t even know what is in — \$1.3 trillion — it’s the second largest ever.” Well, these bills top that both in topline numbers and in swampiness.

These bills do offer a few provisions that have merit in their own right, such as full funding for the First Step Act and the inclusion of the common-sense SECURE Act and CREATES Act. However, there is absolutely no reason that such measures should not be processed by Congress independently as the individual and significant pieces of legislation that they are, or in the case of the First Step Act funding, processed as part of a single appropriations bill, with open and fair amendment processes.

Knowing that there are a few shiny objects buried deep in a heaping pile of manure is no reason to stick one’s hand in the pile, let alone claim the pile as one’s own. The Senate should not pass these bankrupting megabuses, period.

FreedomWorks will count the votes on the Consolidated Appropriations Act and the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act when calculating our Scorecard for 2019 and reserves the right to both weight these votes and to score any related votes. The scorecard is used to determine eligibility for the FreedomFighter Award, which recognizes Members of the House and Senate who consistently vote to support economic freedom and individual liberty.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Brandon', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Adam Brandon
President, FreedomWorks