



March 21, 2018

Key Vote NO on H.Res. 796 and the Consolidated Appropriations Act, H.R. 1625

On behalf of our activist community, I urge you to contact your representative and ask him or her to vote NO on H.Res. 796 and the Consolidated Appropriations Act, H.R. 1625. H.Res. 796 is the rule governing the Consolidated Appropriations Act. The underlying bill is a consolidated appropriations bill packed with unrelated legislative items that Congress has not been able to pass. We oppose the rule governing the underlying bill because of process by which leadership wrote the bill. We oppose the omnibus both because of the process and because it appropriates at the spending levels under the Bipartisan Budget Act.

The process by which this omnibus has been written was awful. After taking the gavel on October 29, 2015, Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) said, “When we rush to pass bill that a lot of us don't understand, we are not doing our job.”

In a separate speech a week later, on November 5, Speaker Ryan said, “[T]he way I am trying to do this job is the way that I always thought it should have been done, and that is to make this a more open process so that every citizen in this country, through their elected representatives, has an opportunity to make a difference.”

This omnibus was written behind closed doors, with few privy to what exactly was going in it. The bill is also more than a week behind schedule. Originally, it was supposed to be released the week of March 12, with a vote by the end of the week. That didn't happen. Leadership hoped to vote on the bill Wednesday of this week, but last second negotiations have continued to delay the release of the bill.

Now, because of the delays to pack this bill with items unrelated to appropriations, leadership plans to waive the “three-day” rule – Rule XXI, Clause II of the *Rules of the House of Representatives* – which requires that bills and resolutions be available for parts of three calendar days. Members and their staff will have less than 24 hours to review the 2,232-page omnibus before they are expected to vote on the bill.

What's more, the rule governing the omnibus prevents amendments from being offered from the floor. This has been an all too common theme for legislation brought to the floor. Because this bill spends nearly \$1.3 trillion, a more open, deliberative process is needed. Leadership may argue that there isn't enough time to vote on amendments, but they have only themselves to blame for the time constraints. This is legislative malpractice, and it simply can't continue.

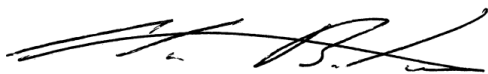
Process aside, the spending levels appropriated in the bill are nothing short of fiscally disastrous. In February, Congress passed the Bipartisan Budget Act, H.R. 1892. This two-year budget agreement blew through the spending caps by nearly four times more than the 2013 two-year budget deal and nearly five times more than the 2015 two-year budget deal. This omnibus is an extension of the Bipartisan Budget Act. It appropriates discretionary spending at \$1.291 trillion – \$700 billion for defense and \$591 billion for nondefense – which is \$143 billion above the spending levels, or caps, established by the Budget Control Act for discretionary spending levels.

Although leadership and other supporters of this spending bill have told Republicans to justify voting for the bill because of the defense spending increases, this argument for either the budget deal or this omnibus is a weak one. As Bloomberg Government noted, the Department of Defense will have to “spend up to \$186 million more than the current contracting rate every day for the rest of the fiscal year.”

This purported justification also ignores the nondefense spending increases. White House Office of Management Director Mick Mulvaney said, “The administration does not believe these non defense spending levels comport with its vision for the proper role and size of the federal government.” With a united Republican government, there is no excuse for such high spending levels.

FreedomWorks will count the vote for H.Res. 796, the rule governing the underlying bill, and the vote for the Consolidated Appropriations Act, H.R. 1625, on our 2018 Congressional Scorecard. 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 'Adam Brandon', with a stylized, flowing script.

Adam Brandon
President, FreedomWorks