

WAND believes that the federal budget is not just a set of numbers, but a fundamental reflection of our nation's values, hopes and priorities. Smarter choices in Pentagon spending would result in cost savings that could help avoid harsh cuts in other areas that invest in our future and create jobs. Moreover, better discipline in Pentagon spending with emphasis on strategies to meet 21<sup>st</sup> century security threats will best ensure sustainable national security now and for generations to come.

**This Year's Budget and Pentagon Spending in Context:** In the President's proposed FY 2017 budget, Pentagon spending (including spending at the Department of Defense (DOD), war spending and spending on nuclear weapons) accounts for 53% of the discretionary budget that Congress appropriates each year. All other programs including education, infrastructure, health care, homeland security, veterans, foreign aid and more make up the remaining 47% of the discretionary budget. Approximately one third of this funding flows to the states where it is an essential component of state budgeting decisions. Overall Pentagon spending is higher than it was during Vietnam and the entire Cold War and over the past decade it has skyrocketed, almost doubling since 2001.

**Some key elements of the Pentagon spending budget proposal that will be much debated this year include:**

#### **Budget Caps:**

The President increased the overall discretionary budget by 7% above budget caps agreed to in the 2011 Budget Control Act stating his intention is to set a budget course "reversing mindless austerity" and aiming to invest in strengthening the middle class. About half of the increase (\$38 billion) is for defense spending and half (\$37 billion) is spread across all the other pieces of the discretionary pie. The Administration has proposed various tax cuts and reforms to pay for the increases over the budget caps for all discretionary spending. Generally, lawmakers in the Republican-led House and Senate are likely to be very resistant to raising the spending caps and resistant to tax proposals as well. As the budget debate unfolds, WAND wants to make sure that we don't see the worst case scenario of more money for the Pentagon and wars and even less for all of the other investments we need.

#### **War Spending Slush Fund**

Added on to the Pentagon's budget is "the war spending slush fund," or Overseas Contingency Operations account, at about \$59 billion. This is money not subject to the budget caps. We're seeing more and more things that used to be in the Pentagon's budget migrate to this special fund — even if they have no direct connection to current combat efforts. By the way, this extra \$51 billion for the Pentagon is more than many federal agencies' entire budgets. In fact, it would come in as the fifth largest spending federal agency in the government.

#### **Nuclear Overspending on Overkill**

We are poised to spend an estimated trillion dollars over the next three decades on rebuilding and upgrading the U.S. nuclear arsenal. This year the President's budget requested billions of dollars for what is essentially a down payment on very large expenses to rebuild nuclear weapons delivery systems that make up the so-called triad — submarines, bombers and missiles. Additionally, more money is going to weapons activities to upgrade nuclear warheads. It's particularly disappointing to see these dollars flowing to lock in a huge U.S. nuclear arsenal for the rest of the century despite President Obama's commitment to "seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons." Moreover, dollars spent on nuclear weapons are not helping to address growing 21<sup>st</sup> century threats such as terrorism or cyber security.

### What's Happening Next: The Budget Process and Pentagon Spending

Now that the President has released his budget blueprint, Congress will now answer with its own blueprint and begin work to allocate spending. Starting now, we are going to see plenty of budget debate in Congress this year:

- The Republican-led House and Senate budget committees are working now to develop Budget Resolutions – their budget blueprints. There will see debate on this through the spring.
- In addition, the appropriations subcommittees are holding budget hearings with agency representatives and will begin working on spending bills in this spring.
- This spring, the House and Senate Armed Services Committees will also be holding hearings and working on the National Defense Authorization Act which set policy and budget authority for the DOD, war spending and nuclear weapons.

### TALKING POINTS

#### Too much Money for the Pentagon

- Year after year Pentagon spending takes over half of the discretionary budget that Congress appropriates. This leaves less for investments needed to create jobs and meet needs in our communities, like first responders, teachers, bridges, roads, rails and safe water pipes. [Recommend that you use most relevant local examples.]
- In an era of fiscal challenges, the Pentagon should have to exercise a little budget discipline too.
- President Obama is proposing to spend more on the military than President Reagan ever did.
- Pentagon spending is higher than it was during Vietnam and North Korea.

#### War Spending Slush Fund

- At \$59 Billion (President's Budget Request for Fiscal Year 2017) this **separate war spending fund** would be the 5<sup>th</sup> largest federal agency in the government. And some lawmakers want to add more.
- Lawmakers and the Pentagon have been using the **war budget as a slush fund** to circumvent spending caps and pay for items that should be in the base budget.
- Blindly allocating billions in **war funds** without specific details about how those funds will be used can only lead to wasteful spending.
- We cannot afford **another war on the nation's credit card**. Funds Congress appropriates for the fight against ISIS can be found by eliminating waste within the Pentagon's existing budget.

#### Waste and lack of oversight at Pentagon

- The Pentagon's budget is so mismanaged and loaded with wasteful spending that it **cannot be audited**.
- The Pentagon is the only Federal Department that **cannot conduct an audit**.

#### Misguided priorities will not address 21st century threats/nuclear weapons

- Current threats will not be solved by buying systems like the **costly F-35** riddled with safety and workability problems, or the **oversized nuclear arsenal**. Many weapons programs were conceived of years ago and have no use against the threats we face today.
- We are planning to spend **a trillion dollars building up the nuclear weapons arsenal** over the next 30 year, but our troops won't be a dime's bit safer or better equipped.
- If we spend a trillion dollars on **nuclear weapons**, we won't be a dollar's better prepared for 21<sup>st</sup> Century threats like terrorism or cyber-attacks.

#### Jobs/ Economy

- Pentagon spending actually ranks last as a way to create jobs when compared to investing the same amount in healthcare, clean energy, or education.
- We will strengthen our economy by eliminating wasteful and unnecessary spending.
- It is irresponsible to cut programs that strengthen our economy and benefit American families while turning a blind eye to obvious areas of potential saving in Pentagon spending.