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WILL is a program of WAND
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Dear Members of Congress:

As you consider budgeting and appropriations decisions this year, we remind you that these decisions will profoundly impact our states and our ability as state legislators to balance budgets, meet the needs of our residents, and invest for the future. **We are writing to urge you to rein in Pentagon spending with a responsible and strategic approach needed for the 21st century.**

The safety of our constituents is of utmost importance, and we strongly support our brave men and women in the military and their families. In order to sustainably strengthen our nation's security for today and for next generations, scrutiny and fiscal discipline must be applied at the Pentagon.

In the President's budget request for Fiscal Year 2017, Pentagon spending, including nuclear weapons and war spending*, would consume 53% of the nation's discretionary budget. Indeed, year after year we see Pentagon spending taking over half of the discretionary budget.

Meanwhile, we have seen cuts and caps to the wide range of other discretionary budget programs and needed investments including education, infrastructure, healthcare and much more. Cuts to these discretionary programs sharply impact our states which receive roughly one third of this funding. As state legislators, we have had to make hard decisions to cut back on needed investments and services. Further curtailing these needed investments will strain state budgets and thwart economic growth.

Within the supersized Pentagon budget, many dollars are expended on programs that are unnecessary, beset with cost overruns, and often completely unworkable. This is simply not sustainable. Finding responsible and strategic cost savings that will strengthen our security for the future **must be a priority**. A prime example where cuts are needed is the oversized and expensive nuclear arsenal. We are poised to spend an estimated trillion dollars over the next three decades on a modernized and upgraded nuclear arsenal, yet these nuclear weapons will not address today's growing security threats such as terrorism or cyber-attacks.

No federal agency, especially not one that is such a large percentage of the federal budget, should be immune from oversight and accountability. Congress should insist that the Pentagon commit to conducting an audit and stand by the numbers. Furthermore, the Defense Department continues to rely inappropriately on Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) funding to support programs that should be part of Department of Defense budget. The President's FY 2017 budget request for the OCO defense spending is \$59 billion**. This funding, that is not subject to budget caps, should not be used as a slush fund, hindering needed scrutiny to all of Pentagon spending. OCO spending on its own is an amount larger than many federal agencies' entire budgets. Yet, some in Congress are asking to add more.

As state legislators, we are committed to creating good jobs that are essential to our economy, and ensuring that our constituents, especially our veterans and military families, can provide their families with security and build a brighter future for their children. By investing some of the billions we spend on Pentagon waste in other sectors of our economy, we would generate more jobs. **Economists at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst found that public dollars invested in clean energy, health care, and education all create significantly more jobs within the U.S. economy than investing an equivalent amount in the military sector.****

We need to stop spending on outdated, unnecessary weapons and instead ensure that we invest in programs that keep us secure and help us prosper – first responders, teachers, bridges, roads, rails and safe water pipes. This will ensure safety, security, and prosperity for generations. As you face some of the most difficult budgeting challenges in our nation's history, **we urge you to responsibly reshape the Pentagon budget to find significant cost savings and ensure that investments to strengthen America are our priority.**

Sincerely,
Women State Legislators from across the Country

*Discretionary budget authority for national defense budget function 050 from Office of Management and Budget

** Note that an additional amount of Overseas Contingency Operations funds (14.9 billion) is requested for the State Department

**[The U.S. Employment Effects of Military and Domestic Spending Priorities: An Updated Analysis. University of Massachusetts-Amherst, Department of Economics \(December 2011\)](#)

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