

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 26, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran, Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader McConnell and Chairman Cochran:

With the expiration of the 2015 Bipartisan Budget Act on September 30, 2017, we believe that a bipartisan and bicameral agreement is needed to replace the irresponsible post-sequestration limits on defense and non-defense discretionary spending that remain in law. Democrats and Republicans demonstrated just recently that we can successfully pass spending bills when we put partisan ideology aside and work together on legislation that helps the middle class by growing the economy. Therefore, we want to reaffirm our principles for the budget and appropriations process and convey our expectations for a Fiscal Year 2018 agreement.

First, we must provide significant relief from sequestration. The sequestration budget cuts required by the Budget Control Act Of 2011 will have long-lasting consequences for America's hard-working families. Discretionary programs are critical for our national security, for creating infrastructure jobs across the nation, caring for our veterans, cleaning up our environment, and advancing scientific knowledge. We should not return to the post-sequestration limits on spending.

Second, we are committed to continuing the parity principle that has guided each of our recent bipartisan budget agreements. In the same way sequestration has undermined military readiness, sequestration has inhibited economic growth and job creation by failing to adequately invest in the infrastructure that makes our communities thrive: roads, bridges, transit and railroad systems, broadband, ports, airports, waterways, schools, and safe and clean water systems. It has eroded our investments in education, worker training, public health and community development that strengthen the middle class and working families. These shortfalls hurt the American people, our economy and make us less secure as a nation. On top of all this, it is now clear we face a shortfall when it comes to adequately funding veterans' health care. For these reasons, we must provide equal relief for both defense and non-defense programs that power our local economies.

Third, as we process the annual appropriations bills, it is essential that they not include poison pill riders, such as those that roll back protections for our veterans, the environment, consumers, and workers; or prohibit funds for critical healthcare services for women through Planned Parenthood. We strongly oppose the inclusion of such riders in any of the must-pass appropriations bills that fund the government.

Finally, we are once again concerned with the President's Fiscal Year 2018 request for a very expensive, ineffective new wall along the southern border with Mexico and new funding for the Department of Homeland Security to hire a "deportation force" and increase detention beds. In addition to the concerns about the border wall we outlined in our March 13, 2017, letter, we are troubled by a new funding request for the Department of Justice to hire an eminent domain strike team, which we understand to be litigators whose sole job will be to assert eminent domain and take private lands from American taxpayers to build a border wall.


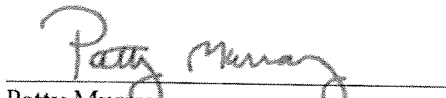

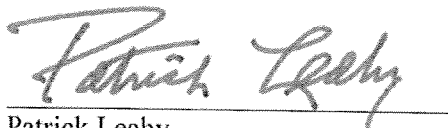
Funding for the government will expire on September 30 unless Congress acts. We are confident that the two parties can resolve our differences before then if we oppose the cuts proposed in the President's Fiscal Year 2018 budget and instead adhere to the principles laid out above – just like we did in April of this year for Fiscal Year 2017. However, we want to reiterate our position that we must complete *all* of the 12 appropriations bills, not just a select few. It is our responsibility to fund the government fully and on time and we are committed to working toward that goal.

Thank you for your consideration of our views. We look forward to working with you in the weeks ahead.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator


Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator
Patty Murray
United States Senator
Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator
Patrick Leahy
United States Senator