

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 9, 2018

The Honorable Mick Mulvaney
Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Director Mulvaney:

As you prepare your fiscal year 2020 budget request, we urge you to include adequate funding for discretionary programs. Building on the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 (BBA18), we hope we can all recognize that the limits on this funding determined by the Budget Control Act of 2011(BCA) are not adequate and need to be increased. We are committed to working with you to ensure that our country's national and economic security are protected.


The BCA was designed to establish caps on discretionary programs so austere that they would force agreement on a deficit reduction plan. When agreement was not reached, these draconian caps became reality – and we have been dealing with the consequences ever since. While Congress has generally raised the caps for two years at a time, this has come at great disruption to the Appropriations process. Instead of repeating this chaos, we need to address the final two years governed by the BCA in a timely way.

As you develop your request for 2020, we request that you build upon the priorities reflected in BBA18. There are two new significant issues that must be acknowledged. First, the VA MISSION Act permanently authorized and transferred the costs associated with the VA Choice program to the discretionary side of the budget beginning in June 2019. Thus, the 2019 non-defense level provides only four months of this funding. In 2020, the full year will need to be provided with discretionary funds. This issue will continue in 2021. In addition, unique to 2020, the Census Bureau will require a large one-time increase to effectively execute the constitutionally mandated count of all persons living in the United States. These added pressures make it imperative that the 2020 request include a strong investment in non-defense programs in addition to the increases for national defense that you have supported in your previous budgets.

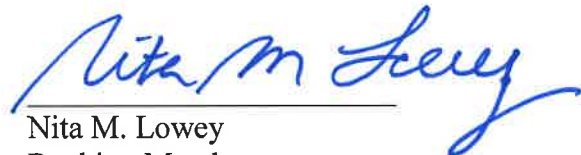
For the 2020 budget and appropriations process to work smoothly, we must once again reach agreement on new discretionary limits as soon as possible. From there, the President's Budget request can guide Congress in its work, but only if it adequately funds both defense and non-defense discretionary programs. Non-defense investments are not only critical to economic growth and job creation, but also enhance our security in other ways, including through diplomacy, homeland security, law enforcement, and veterans' health care.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. To serve the American people well, we must avoid government shutdowns and partisan brinksmanship that have defined recent budget cycles and instead produce a budget and appropriations bills that reflect the true priorities of the American people.

Sincerely,



John Yarmuth
Ranking Member
House Committee on the Budget



Nita M. Lowey
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations