

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

May 19, 2020

The Honorable Adam Smith  
Chairman  
House Armed Services Committee  
2216 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mac Thornberry  
Ranking Member  
House Armed Services Committee  
2216 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Thornberry:

We write to request a reduction in defense spending during the coronavirus pandemic.

As you draft this year's National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), we encourage you to authorize a level of spending below last year's authorized level. Congress must remain focused on responding to the coronavirus pandemic and distributing needed aid domestically. In order to do so, appropriators must have access to increased levels of non-defense spending which could be constrained by any increase to defense spending.

In the last three years alone – during a time of relative peace – we have increased annual defense spending by more than \$100 billion, almost 20 percent. This has occurred during a period without any military action authorized by this Congress. Right now, the coronavirus is our greatest adversary. It has killed more than 90,000 Americans, far surpassing the number of casualties during the Vietnam War.<sup>1</sup> We must remain focused on combating the coronavirus and not on increasing military spending that already outpaces the next 10 closest nations combined (China, India, Russia, Saudi Arabia, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Japan, South Korea, and Brazil).<sup>2</sup> At some point, spending more than every other nation on earth must be enough.

America needs a coronavirus cure, not more war. We need more testing, not more bombs. In order to reopen our nation in a data-driven, safe manner, we need to focus our spending efforts on the millions of additional coronavirus tests and tens of thousands of additional contract tracers we will need, as well as covering treatment costs, developing therapeutics, and distributing future vaccines.

We thank you for your service as Chairman and Ranking Member of the Armed Services Committee and your consideration of this request. These are unparalleled times. We encourage you to constrain defense spending during this pandemic so that we can defeat the greatest threat to our nation – the coronavirus.

Sincerely,



Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.archives.gov/research/military/vietnam-war/casualty-statistics>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.pgpf.org/chart-archive/0053\\_defense-comparison](https://www.pgpf.org/chart-archive/0053_defense-comparison)

Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress

Steve Cohen  
Member of Congress

Peter DeFazio  
Member of Congress

Diana DeGette  
Member of Congress

Adriano Espaillat  
Member of Congress

Dwight Evans  
Member of Congress

Jesús G. “Chuy” García  
Member of Congress

Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress

Jared Huffman  
Member of Congress

Pramila Jayapal  
Member of Congress

Henry C. “Hank” Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Joseph P. Kennedy, III  
Member of Congress

Ro Khanna  
Member of Congress

Andy Levin  
Member of Congress

James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress

Grace F. Napolitano  
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez  
Member of Congress

Ilhan Omar  
Member of Congress

Ayanna Pressley  
Member of Congress

Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress

John Sarbanes  
Member of Congress

Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress

José E. Serrano  
Member of Congress

Rashida Tlaib  
Member of Congress

Nydia M. Velázquez  
Member of Congress

Bonnie Watson Coleman  
Member of Congress