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. 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). 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

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1 https://www.archives.gov/research/military/vietnam-war/casualty-statistics
2 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

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