

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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**Democratic Priorities for Agriculture, Commerce-Justice-Science & Transportation-HUD
FY2012 Appropriations**

WASHINGTON, D.C., November 2nd- Following passage in the Senate of a measure that includes Agriculture; Commerce, Justice, Science; and Transportation, HUD Appropriations, House Appropriations Committee Ranking Democratic Member Rep. Norm Dicks made the following statement in addition to laying out a list of Democratic priorities as the House and Senate prepare to conference:

“As we prepare to conference, I will continue to advocate for responsible funding levels to services that the American people expect of their government, while urging a timely conclusion to consideration of the FY2012 budget.”

Below is list of priorities that Democrats would like to see responsibly funded in the conference agreement

AGRICULTURE

Food Assistance for Women, Children and the Elderly

WIC: Earlier in the year the Republican Leadership proposed a FY12 funding level for this nutrition program that the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities now estimates would turn away more than [700,000](#) eligible low-income women and young children. Needless to say, in the midst of a recession and unemployment at 9%, this was completely unacceptable. WIC should be funded at a level that accounts for the greater need across the country and doesn't turn away eligible low-income recipients.

Commodity Supplemental Food Program: CSFP provides food assistance to particularly vulnerable low-income elderly as well as mothers and young children. Earlier in the year the Republican budget proposed to cut CSFP by \$38 million below the enacted level which would have required more than 100,000, or roughly 1 out of every 6, participants to be dropped from the program. Republicans continue to look to CSFP for cuts, however this is no time to be pulling the rug out from underneath low-income Americans.

Food Safety: [Polling](#) shows that an overwhelming majority (85%) of Americans support the government's role in ensuring food safety, with a large plurality (66%) supporting an increase – not a reduction – in food safety funding. However, the Republican Leadership has proposed harmful cuts to food safety and inspection programs.

Food Safety and Inspection Service, USDA: The FSIS budget consists almost entirely of personnel costs for meat inspectors and support staff, meaning a cut to FSIS means less oversight with the furloughing and/or layoff of inspectors. By law meat processing plants are required to be inspected to avoid the public health and economic implications of contaminated food.

Food and Drug Administration: The FDA needs to be funded at a level that allows it to continue implementing the Food Safety Modernization Act . Over 48 million Americans contract a food borne illness every year, making it imperative that we begin work upgrading our food safety oversight.

Contaminated food is both dangerous and costly. Providing responsible levels for food safety at both agencies is needed to protect the public as well as the economy.

COMMERCE, JUSTICE, SCIENCE

Law Enforcement

Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS): The Republican Leadership did not fund COPS hiring or any other COPS office programs in their proposed FY12 bill. This state, local, and tribal grants program supports law enforcement agencies with hiring and retaining police officers, provides equipment to tribal law enforcement agencies, and provides training on community-oriented policing. The revenue base for local governments has shrunk due to the recession, adversely affecting law enforcement budgets across the country. COPS funding needs to be included in FY12 appropriations.

U.S. Marshals Service/Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)/Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms (ATF): In recent years, Congress directed these three agencies to provide additional law enforcement agents to protect the southwest border. It's important that Congress now provide the funds needed to support these agents in addition to the many other law enforcement responsibilities these agencies carry out.

Legal Services Corporation (LSC): LSC funding has declined at the same time that the need for low-income legal services has increased due to the recession. The Republican Leadership's proposed funding level would further widen what the *New York Times*

[calls](#)

a "justice gap" where four-fifths of low-income Americans have no access to a lawyer in civil cases. The

Times

has been

[joined](#)

by the American Bar Association in calling for a more responsible level of funding for LSC over what has been proposed in the GOP bill.

Economic Census: Opposition to the Republican Leadership's proposed cuts to the Census Bureau is overwhelming as the agency will not be able to perform the 2012 economic census at the funding levels in the GOP bill. Businesses and economists need the data that this census produces to make informed decisions. Needless to say, with an economy teetering and recovery slow, this is no time for America to be flying blind.

"If you're trying to figure out what policy measures America should be taking right now to promote job growth for families and workers, without data sets like the 2012 economic census it's going to be a lot harder to do,"

– Matthew Slaughter, *Former Member of George W. Bush's Council of Economic Advisors*

In a letter to the Senate Appropriations Committee, 6 former Directors of the Census Bureau urge the Committee to fund the Bureau at a level that ensures a ["robust and timely"](#) 2012 Economic Census.

Federal Prison System:□ The Republican Leadership proposed an inadequate funding level for the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) that would prevent the bureau from beginning or completing occupancy at 3 newly built prisons. However, BOP would still be required to maintain these prisons. We would have a situation where correctional officers would literally be maintaining unoccupied prison cells – an unacceptable waste of taxpayer's dollars. It should be noted that these facilities were also *built* at taxpayer expense and BOP should be funded at a level that allows it to make use of these investments.

TRANSPORTATION, HUD

Emergency Relief:□ The Republican Leadership does not provide emergency funding for the backlog of road, highway and bridge projects that were damaged by natural disasters.

AMTRAK: The Republican proposal proposed inadequate funding for AMTRAK as well as a legislative provision that would eliminate service in 26 short-distance routes, affecting 15 States and more than 9 million passengers.

National Infrastructure Investment (TIGER Grants): The Republican Leadership did not provide any funding for the TIGER grant program, which helps to address the enormous backlog in transportation infrastructure projects across the country.

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Housing Counseling Assistance: The Republican Leadership was successful in eliminating Housing Counseling Assistance in FY2011. This program provided grant funds to local non-profit agencies for reverse mortgage, rental, home pre-purchase and foreclosure prevention counseling and should be funded in FY2012. We are by no means through the housing crisis and Housing Counseling Assistance is needed now to promote sound home financing.

Choice Neighborhoods Initiative: Republican Leadership also proposed eliminating this program entirely in their FY2012 bill. Choice is a grant program to revitalize public housing in mixed-income neighborhoods. This program should be preserved as it provides quality low-income housing while the vast majority of these funds create needed construction jobs.

Interagency Council on Homelessness: The Republican Leadership proposed eliminating this agency entirely in their FY12 proposal. We were successful in securing funding for the USICH in the THUD Subcommittee and we continue to encourage funding the USICH in the FY12 agreement as it enhances the Federal Government's response to homelessness by coordination between agencies- addressing duplicative programs and identifying best-practices.

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