

***Full Committee Ranking Member, Rep. Norm Dicks***□

*July 18, 2012*

"Thank you, Chairman Rehberg. I appreciate the work that has been done to advance this appropriations bill for the next fiscal year, representing the last of the 12 bills to move through Subcommittee in the House. Though we may have our differences on the substance of this and other bills, I believe it is important for this Committee and for Congress as a whole to demonstrate our ability to proceed in some form of regular order.

"And we do have serious differences, Mr. Chairman, about the bill that is being presented to the Subcommittee by the Majority.

"To begin with, it provides \$6.8 billion less than was appropriated in the current fiscal year, making deep cuts to vital programs that address basic human needs. The result would be substantial hardship for sick and needy Americans, the loss of educational opportunities for the kids of working class citizens and the reduction of thousands of jobs in education, health care and other fields at a time when unemployment in the United States remains above 8 percent.

"In addition to the proposed budget reductions in this bill, it also contains a number of policy riders that have no place in an appropriations bill and which stand little chance of ever becoming law. Most of these are intended to make political statements ... especially in this election year. I understand that, but at the end of the day most would never be accepted by the other body nor signed by the President, so I believe they have no place in this bill.

"Among the most objectionable policy provisions in this bill are those which seek to repeal or nullify major portions of the Affordable Care Act. Following the Supreme Court ruling on the constitutionality of the Act, it is time to move on toward full implementation so that Americans will continue to realize the benefits of this landmark legislation. And furthermore, CBO has scored the Affordable Care Act with savings over 10-years ... meaning a full repeal of the law would increase the deficit. The bill proposed by the Chairman includes language prohibiting the use of any funds that would be used to "implement, administer, enforce, or further" the

provisions of the Affordable Care Act.

"The Chairman's mark relies heavily on cuts to the Affordable Care Act to achieve its required reductions, including:

- Rescissions totaling \$6 billion from mandatory appropriations included in the Act;
- \$3.5 billion cut by prohibiting implementation of much of the act itself; and,
- About \$400 million in cuts to the discretionary appropriation for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (most of which are apparently intended to come from Affordable Care Act-related activities).

"Mr. Chairman, now that the Supreme Court has ruled, how much longer must we keep re-fighting these battles?

"We also object to the net reduction of \$1.2 billion for elementary and secondary education programs, despite an increase to the special education account, which we always welcome. The biggest cut would come to programs that target our neediest students and are designed to bring major reforms and efficiencies to America's public schools. While the Republican leadership is quick to criticize the state of our public schools, it is at the same time abandoning the tools and resources to help states and local school districts to make the system better.

"The bill also proposes to eliminate a host of smaller education programs that, through small amounts of money, provide enormous leverage for local entities to develop and support a number of innovative projects. Among these programs are Math and Science Partnerships, Arts in Education, Transition to Teaching. Also on the chopping block in this bill is the Carol White Physical Education Program, an exemplary federal program that helps local educational agencies and community organizations to directly address the obesity epidemic through physical activities.

"The bill also proposes to eliminate funding for a number of programs and agencies that are broadly supported by our constituents. It begins phasing out Federal support for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, which provides quality, commercial-free programming on current events to millions of listeners and viewers in communities throughout our nation, eliminating it entirely in 2015. It proposes to eliminate Americorps, which gives thousands of young people the means they otherwise would not have to work with children, the elderly and veterans; to help FEMA and other agencies to respond to natural disasters; and, to help maintain and improve access to parks and other public lands.

"I would also like note that this bill proposes eliminating the modest federal investment in Special Olympics. As my colleagues know, Special Olympics provides year-round sports training and support to children and adults with intellectual disabilities. In addition to the obvious fitness benefits, this program teaches courage and self-reliance to its participants and provides an important community for these athletes and their families. The \$8 million that the federal government provided in FY 2012 is critical for leveraging other private and public funds, and I hope that during the process we can work together to restore this program of great national importance.

"So with that said, we are prepared to begin consideration of this bill and I remain hopeful that we can work together through the rest of this year to develop a version of the bill that will have broader and more bipartisan support. Thank you Mr. Chairman."

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