



July 12, 2018

Dear Conferee,

As the conference committee on the House and Senate versions of the mini-omnibus appropriations bill begins deliberations, I am writing to express the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget's strong opposition to any discretionary cap increase or adjustment for the VA MISSION Act unless this additional spending is fully offset. Allowing this spending above the cap could easily add over [\\$50 billion](#) to the debt over the next decade. With deficits approaching the trillion-dollar mark, adding tens of billions of dollars more to the deficit is simply unacceptable.

Current budget rules rightly require any new discretionary spending to be appropriated within overall spending caps. Considering the massive \$150 billion per year cap increases authorized in the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018, there should be sufficient fiscal flexibility to offset new veterans' health spending with other discretionary reductions.

If conferees are unable to find the necessary discretionary savings to pay for the new VA appropriations, they should finance a discretionary cap increase with mandatory program savings, new revenues, or some combination. The Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget recently published a [long list of possible pay-fors](#) – enough to more than offset any new discretionary spending. I encourage all conferees to review these illustrative offsets or suggest alternatives.

The current discretionary spending caps have only been in place since February, and for Congress to break those caps less than six months after the budget agreement signed into law would create an irresponsible precedent. Current discretionary spending caps have been raised substantially; lifting them further to finance new spending – no matter how worthy – will create political pressure to break the caps again and again for new priorities and pet projects.

Further, failing to offset this new spending will only exacerbate the effects of the recent debt-financed tax cuts and the Bipartisan Budget Act's lack of pay-fors for the increased spending caps. Our nation cannot afford to keep adding to the national credit card.

As we said [last month](#), “We all agree that our veterans deserve quality health care. But when something is important, it means that we should be willing to pay for it, not that we should shrug off the bill.”



We welcome the opportunity to work with all conferees in finding necessary offsets and creating a fiscally responsible approach to providing cost-effective health care for our nation's veterans. Thank for your consideration of our views.

Sincerely,

Maya MacGuineas

President, Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget