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NDD United Opposes Senate OCO Gimmick

NDD United, an alliance of over 2,100 organizations working together to restore funding to nondefense discretionary programs, strongly opposes the plan put forward by Senator John McCain in his proposed amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act of 2017. This amendment would allow defense spending to violate the budget caps set by the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015 by adding \$18 billion in overseas contingency operations (OCO) funding to supplement the Pentagon's base budget. This strategy is an attempt to increase defense without addressing the needs of the nondefense discretionary budget, thus violating the "parity principle," set forth and maintained in recent bipartisan budget deals, as well as in prior measures to reduce sequestration cuts.

No amount of gimmicks can fix the problems caused by austere budget caps and sequestration. The effects of cuts to both defense and nondefense discretionary funding can be seen in the efforts to work around the caps, as current levels do not allow for appropriators to invest appropriately in the programs that keep Americans healthy, safe, and secure. Rather, they create a scenario where even the most successful government programs face flat funding or cuts year after year and new programs with promise cannot be launched. In addition, they have promoted the use of tactics such as using war funding to pay for routine military expenses.

Rather than continue to look to treat the symptoms of sequestration and austerity, Congress should work together to reach an agreement that replaces sequestration and ends this era of austerity once and for all. Further, any plan to replace sequestration should abide by the "parity principle" requiring that any relief from sequestration for the defense budget be met with equal relief for the nondefense budget.

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