



## 2014 WiLL Budget Letter to Congress

### Dear Members of Congress:

As you consider budgeting and appropriations decisions this year, we remind you that these decisions will profoundly impact our states and our ability as state legislators to balance budgets, meet the needs of our residents, and invest for the future. **We are writing to urge you to rein in Pentagon spending with a responsible and strategic approach needed for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.**

The safety of our constituents is of utmost importance, and we strongly support our brave men and women in the military and their families. In order to sustainably strengthen our nation's security for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, scrutiny and fiscal discipline must be applied at the Pentagon.

**Year after year, Pentagon spending, including nuclear weapons and war spending, consumes more than half of the nation's discretionary budget.** This spending has nearly doubled over the last decade. In contrast, the remaining discretionary funding for programs ranging from food safety, to Head Start, health care, and much more has been cut as budget deals and sequestration have forced austerity measures across a wide array of programs and needed investments. Cuts to these discretionary programs sharply impact our states which receive roughly one third of this funding. Rising costs, a slow recovery, sequestration, and possibilities of deeper cuts to alleviate the deficit and debt have burdened states in the past years. As state legislators we have had to make hard decisions to cut back on needed investments and services. Further cuts will add strain to state budgets and thwart economic growth.

While some reductions to the FY 2015 Pentagon budget have been announced, overall this budget remains high for the coming years. Study after study has shown that too many dollars are expended on programs that are unnecessary, unwanted or unworkable and beset with cost overruns. This is simply not sustainable. Finding responsible and strategic cost savings that will strengthen our security for the future **must be a priority** for the Pentagon. A prime example where cuts are needed is the oversized nuclear arsenal that many military leaders and defense experts from across the political spectrum agree is an expensive relic of a bygone era.

**No federal department, especially not one that is such a large percentage of the federal budget, should be immune from oversight and accountability.** The Pentagon should commit to conducting an audit and stand by the numbers. Furthermore, even as we are ending war in Afghanistan, the Defense Department has continued to rely inappropriately on the Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO), or war spending account, for programs that should be part of

regular appropriations. The war spending account – which is not subject to budget caps – should not be used as a slush fund, hindering needed scrutiny to all of Pentagon spending.

As state legislators, we are committed to creating good jobs that are essential to our economy, and ensuring that our constituents and the veterans among them can provide their families with security and build a brighter future for their children. By investing some of the billions we spend on Pentagon waste in other sectors of our economy, we would generate more jobs. **Economists at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst found that public dollars invested in clean energy, health care, and education all create significantly more jobs within the U.S. economy than investing an equivalent amount in the military sector.\***

We can shift from spending on outdated, unnecessary weapons to investing in programs that keep us secure and help us prosper – first responders, teachers, bridges, roads, and rails. This will ensure safety, security, and prosperity for generations. As you face some of the most difficult budgeting challenges in our nation's history, **we urge you to responsibly reshape the Pentagon budget to find significant cost savings and ensure that investments to strengthen America are our priority.**

Sincerely,

Women legislators across the country

\*The United States Employment Effects of Military and Domestic Spending Priorities: An Updated Analysis, University of Massachusetts-Amherst, Department of Economics (December 2011)