

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 7, 2016

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Leader:

We are writing to reiterate our interest in working cooperatively to facilitate the Fiscal Year 2017 appropriations process. As such, we urge you to encourage the Appropriations Committee to act as soon as possible to adopt fair subcommittee allocations that comply with the framework of last year's Bipartisan Budget Act. By doing so, you can help to ensure that there is a possibility of completing the process in the time available.

We know you share our goal of returning to the regular order by considering appropriations legislation separately, rather than again waiting until the end of the year to enact a massive omnibus bill. As we see it, restoring the regular order promises not only a more open and transparent process, but a chance for senators on both sides of the aisle to participate meaningfully in funding decisions. This is a win-win opportunity, and we should seize it together.

The effort to complete the full appropriations process will be a race against a Senate calendar that is unusually abbreviated, in part because of the timing of the party conventions. Due to the fact that even a single Senator has the ability to withhold consent and thereby block a quick vote, even a relatively non-controversial appropriations bill easily can take a week or more of the Senate's time.

Fortunately, the framework established by the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015 (BBA), which paid for the changes in spending, will allow us to jumpstart the process. The BBA not only sets the total amount of discretionary spending for Fiscal Year 2017, it establishes the levels for both non-defense and defense programs, including the levels of Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO). These decisions mean there is no need to wait for adoption of another budget resolution before the Appropriations Committee decides how to divide resources among its subcommittees and allows those subcommittees to get to work.

A product of painstaking negotiation and compromise, the BBA established a bipartisan framework for Congress to move forward on annual funding bills based on the principles of full and fairly allocated funding, a rejection of poison pill riders, and parity between the Pentagon's needs and other needs here at home, including other security priorities. Honoring

those principles will allow us to pick up where we left off and make significant strides toward returning to regular order by completing a full appropriations process. Providing Appropriations Subcommittees with allocations that reflect last year's agreement, and its principle of parity, is a critical step in that process.

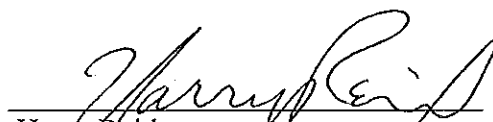
We hope you will take this proposal seriously, and in the constructive spirit in which it is offered.

Thank you for your consideration of our views.

Sincerely,



Barbara Mikulski



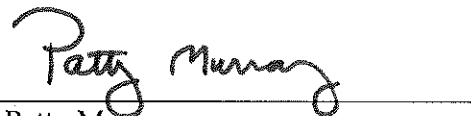
Harry Reid



Charles Schumer



Richard Durbin



Patty Murray