



WOMEN LEGISLATORS' LOBBY

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WiLL is a program of WAND
(Women's Action for New Directions)

www.wand.org

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To all U.S. Senators and Representatives:

We, the undersigned women state legislators, write to offer our strong support for a federal budget that invests in our states and communities and in diplomatic initiatives designed to reduce the need for military conflicts that drain state resources. Nearly one-third of federally-appropriated money flows to the states, funding that is critical to addressing state needs, such as drug addiction crises, community safety, child hunger and nutrition, budget shortfalls, and myriad programs and services that invest in the American people, in our communities, and in vulnerable populations, including millions of women. In light of this, **we urge you to reject President Trump's Fiscal Year 2018 budget request**, which proposes increasing security-related spending – spending on the Pentagon, nuclear weapons, and war funding -- by \$54 billion by cutting the same amount in departments and programs that promote economic stability and growth, diplomacy, and international engagement.

The Trump "America First" budget is unsustainable. Already, non-defense funding must be split among a shrinking pool of resources. In fact, under the Budget Control Act spending caps, domestic discretionary spending is expected to fall to its lowest level as a share of the economy since 1962. The proposed Trump budget, however, adds insult to injury, by cutting this portion of the budget even further, by about 15 percent.

Women, in particular, are left behind by Trump's budget blueprint. Cuts to the Department of Health and Human Services by 18 percent and the Department of Labor by 21 percent, for instance, would negatively impact on women who depend on the health care safety net for the economic security and stability and could threaten the enforcement of equal pay and women's equality in the workforce. Cuts to programs that serve the elderly or individuals with disabilities would shift the burden of care to women, who disproportionately fill the gap when other help is unavailable.

Meanwhile, proposed increases to the Pentagon budget aren't based on common sense or need. While the domestic discretionary share of the budget is at historic lows in relation to the size of the economy, funding for the Pentagon is historically high. Despite campaign rhetoric claiming a "depleted" military, retired General David Petraeus and Michael O'Hanlon wrote recently in the *Wall Street Journal* that "America's fighting forces remain ready for battle." In fact, in inflation-adjusted terms, the \$600 billion per-year Pentagon budget is nearly \$100 billion above the Cold War average. Yet, unlike other agencies, the Pentagon has never passed a federally-mandated audit, meaning it cannot fully account for how it spends its money.

Practically speaking, the Trump budget blueprint will also stymie economic growth and shift costs to the states. By robbing domestic programs to pay for increases to an already historically large Pentagon budget, President Trump's budget would likely result in loss of jobs and economic decline. In 2011, the University of Massachusetts determined that given equal spending on the Pentagon versus other sectors, the non-defense spending created substantially more jobs within the U.S. economy. As the report explains, "investments in the green economy, health care and education will produce between about 50 to 140 percent more jobs than if the same amount of money were spent by the Pentagon."

Finally, the Trump budget is self-defeating. It would create more problems in the world rather than provide the resources to address them. The Trump budget would slash State Department and US Agency for International Development (USAID) funding by 32 percent compared to current levels. As Secretary of Defense James Mattis testified to Congress in 2013, “If you cut the State Department’s budget, then you need to buy me more bullets.” Funding to increase stability and engagement overseas costs just one percent of the overall money spent by Congress each year; yet it provides for global stability, opens new markets, and prevents the need for the United States to be the world’s police force.

Moreover, we are particularly concerned about cuts for international programs that empower women and girls. Programs that promote women’s inclusion in conflict prevention and resolution and equal rights and opportunity for women is one of the most effective ways to create more peaceful and prosperous nations.

There are ready made solutions to staunching cuts to diplomacy and international engagement. In 2015, an internal Pentagon report found \$125 billion in savings over five years in wasteful spending on high-cost contractors and other types of “administrative waste in its business operations.” The *Washington Post* reported that the report was buried by high-level officials. To put this into context, eliminating \$25 billion in already identified wasteful Pentagon spending per year would save the entire proposed \$14.7 billion cut to the International Affairs budget.

In closing, we again urge you to reject the Trump budget. Instead, **pass a budget that invests in ordinary Americans and in preventing conflict.** In particular, we urge you to take into account how federal investments support women’s economic security, and conversely, how cuts disproportionately affect women, who are over half the population of our nation.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this matter. Please direct your reply to Women’s Action for New Directions (WAND) at 322 4th St. NE, Washington, DC 20002 or by email to kromines@wand.org.

Sincerely,

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State Representative Laura Hall

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