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WILL is a program of WAND
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Dear Member 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 21st 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 today and for next generations, scrutiny and fiscal discipline must be applied at the Pentagon.

In the President's budget request for Fiscal Year 2016, Pentagon spending, including nuclear weapons and war spending,\* would consume 53% of the nation's discretionary budget surpassing agreed-to budget caps by \$38 billion. Indeed, year after year we see Pentagon spending taking over half of the discretionary budget, and this spending has nearly doubled over the last decade.

Meanwhile, we have seen cuts to the wide range of other discretionary budget programs and needed investments - including education, infrastructure, health care and much more. Cuts to these discretionary programs sharply impact our states which receive roughly one third of this funding. 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.

Within the supersized Pentagon spending budget, 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. A prime example where cuts are needed is the oversized and expensive nuclear arsenal. We are poised to spend an estimated trillion dollars over the next three decades on a modernized and upgraded nuclear arsenal, yet these nuclear weapons will not address today's growing security threats such as terrorism or cyber attacks.

No federal agency, especially not one that is such a large percentage of the federal budget, should be immune from oversight and accountability. Congress should insist that the Pentagon commit to conducting an audit and stand by the numbers. Furthermore, the Defense Department continues to rely inappropriately on the Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO), or war spending account, to support programs that should be part of regular appropriations. The President's FY 2016 budget request for the war spending account is \$51 billion. Although this is less than in previous years, it is still an amount larger than many federal agencies' entire budgets. This fund - which is not subject to budget caps - should not be used as a slush fund, hindering needed scrutiny of 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, including our veterans, 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 state legislators from across the country

\*Discretionary budget authority for national defense budget function 050 from Office of Management and Budget
\*\*The U.S. Employment Effects of Military and Domestic Spending Priorities: An Updated Analysis, University of

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