

Dear Secretary Castro,

We are writing because we believe it is time to stop misdirecting hundreds of billions of dollars away from domestic and human needs to pad unnecessary budget lines for endless wars, failed weapons and the Pentagon's corporate handouts.

We are writing to encourage you to adopt a Pentagon spending cuts agenda that incorporates the following three commitments:

- Pentagon spending should be reduced by at least \$200 billion annually, freeing up \$2 trillion or more over the next decade for domestic and human needs priorities.
- The United States should never again go to war without Congressional authorization, and Congress should not authorize military action without identifying revenue to pay for current and future costs, including taking care of injured veterans.
- By adhering to our values and promoting international cooperation, we can prevent war, address the underlying causes of conflict and meet humanitarian imperatives.

Included with this letter please find an elaboration of this agenda, one that we believe denotes a new path forward for the United States. Pentagon spending has spiraled out of control. It is long past time to eliminate excess Pentagon spending and invest the savings in urgent domestic and human needs priorities – environmental protection, education, infrastructure, health care and more -- that will make the United States stronger and more just.

We would like to meet with you to discuss this agenda at your earliest convenience. We will reach out to schedule a meeting shortly.

Sincerely,

350.org

Center For Popular Democracy

CODEPINK

CREDO Action

Daily Kos

Demand Progress

Democracy For America

Friends Committee on National Legislation

Friends of the Earth

Greenpeace USA

Indivisible

Institute for Policy Studies, National Priorities Project
and New Internationalism Project

Just Foreign Policy

MoveOn

Peace Action

Public Citizen

Roots Action

Social Security Works

United We Dream

Win Without War

Women's Action for New Directions (WAND)

World Beyond War

An Agenda to End Wasteful Military Spending And For a Just and More Prosperous Future

It's time to stop misdirecting hundreds of billions of dollars away from domestic and human needs to pad unnecessary budget lines for endless wars, failed weapons and the Pentagon's corporate handouts. Doing so will make our country stronger and more just.

Military spending should be reduced by at least \$200 billion annually, freeing up \$2 trillion or more over the next decade for domestic and human needs priorities. With those spending cuts, the Pentagon's budget would remain more than enough to keep America safe at a level well above our nation's post-World War II historical average.

The U.S. should never again go to war without congressional authorization, and Congress should not authorize military action without identifying revenue to pay for current and future costs, including taking care of injured veterans.

By adhering to our values and promoting international cooperation, we can prevent war, address the underlying causes of conflict and meet humanitarian imperatives.

1. Reallocate the Bloated Pentagon Budget to Meet Domestic and Human Needs

Military spending should be reduced by at least \$200 billion annually, freeing up \$2 trillion or more over the next decade for domestic and human needs priorities. With those spending cuts, the military budget would remain more than enough to keep America safe, at a level well above our nation's post-World War II historical average.

At \$716 billion per year, this year's budget for the Pentagon and related agencies is at one of its highest levels since World War II – more than the next seven nations in the world combined, five of which are U.S. allies.

As former U.S. Defense Secretary Bob Gates once said, "If the Department of Defense can't figure out a way to defend the United States on a budget of more than half a trillion dollars a year, then our problems are much bigger than anything that can be cured by a few more ships and planes."

We can make America and its allies safer for less. We can start by eliminating tens of billions of dollars in waste and fraud – from excess bureaucracy, to redundant personnel, to overpriced spare parts, to weapons systems that have experienced huge cost overruns – from the Pentagon budget.

Even more importantly, the U.S. needs to refrain from waging the kinds of unnecessary and counterproductive wars it has fought in this century.

U.S. post-9/11 wars have cost an astonishing \$5.9 trillion, including long-term costs like taking care of veterans of these wars and paying the interest on war-related debt.

It is long past time to eliminate excess Pentagon spending and invest the savings in urgent domestic and human needs priorities – environmental protection, education, infrastructure, health care and more – that will make the U.S. stronger and more just.

2. No Wars That Aren't Legally Authorized and Paid For

The U.S. should never again go to war without congressional authorization, and Congress should not authorize military action without identifying revenue to pay for current and future costs, including taking care of wounded veterans.

The U.S. should never go to war until such action has been authorized by Congress.

Circumventing Congress violates the basic precepts of the U.S. Constitution and the War Powers Resolution – and leads to illegal unauthorized wars that are often more reckless and costly for lack of advance Congressional and public debate and scrutiny. Examples of illegal wars include the conflicts in Yemen, Somalia, Libya and Syria.

Nor should Congress authorize war without explaining how it will pay for military action and legacy costs. “Fight now, pay later” removes vital cost considerations from wartime debates – and then imposes costs on future generations, both as debt and long-term health care for veterans – that strip funding away from other priorities.

3. Adhere to Our Values and Work Toward International Cooperation

By adhering to our values and promoting international cooperation, we can prevent war, address the underlying causes of conflict and meet humanitarian imperatives.

Most of the world's most pressing problems – climate change, the global burden of disease, the risk of nuclear war, global poverty and inequality – can be solved only through cooperation among nations and global citizen's networks.

The U.S. should repair the damage done by the Trump administration by reaffirming basic commitments like the Paris Climate Accord, the Iran nuclear deal, and the treaty to keep medium-range nuclear weapons out of Europe, and work for new international accords to address key global problems.

The U.S. needs allies to address the multiple security challenges it faces. But those alliances should be based on the condition that U.S. security partners adhere to basic principles of U.S. and international law, including respecting fundamental human rights and refraining from aggression against other nations.

Some U.S. alliances, though touted as important to our security, actually do far more harm than good, undermining our national security and drawing us into endless war.

Advancing international cooperation and international human rights norms not only are ends in themselves, but they will reduce conflict and diminish the risk of costly wars while paving the pathway toward a better, more just, and equitable world.