

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Senate Armed Services Committee
728 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee
2264 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Ranking Members Reed and Smith,

Pete Hegseth's Pentagon should not receive an extra penny from the American people. As you conference the FY26 NDAA, we urge you not to hand Hegseth funding above the \$892.6 billion¹ agreed upon by the House of Representatives.

This is not a normal moment in American history, nor a normal moment for Pentagon spending decisions. We urge you to account for these abnormalities in negotiations over Pentagon funding levels.

First, the Pentagon budget has already been supercharged by the reconciliation bill. Due to the \$150 billion in additional Pentagon spending passed in the GOP's Big Ugly Law, the current Pentagon budget is already on track to surpass \$1 trillion annually, despite the agency failing every audit it has ever undergone.²

Second, the surge in Pentagon spending stands in sharp contrast to the drastic cuts in healthcare and food assistance programs imposed by the reconciliation package and the further injuries Republicans are inflicting by shutting down the government and refusing to negotiate over still more health care cuts. At such a time, bipartisan agreement to provide additional funds to the Pentagon would deliver a cruel message to the American public, one out of step with Democratic messaging over health care, reconciliation, and the shutdown.

Third, Trump and Pete Hegseth are deploying Pentagon forces dangerously and unconstitutionally, domestically and abroad. It would be wrong to implicitly endorse these actions by conferring extra money on Hegseth's Pentagon.

President Trump's first action after renaming the "Department of Defense" the "Department of War" was announcing via TruthSocial that Chicago, a city filled with 2.7 million Americans, was "about to find out why".³ We are seeing the administration intensify its National Guard domestic deployments, an authoritarian move that is plainly designed to clamp down on dissent and chill Americans' First Amendment expression. A military sending armed soldiers into U.S. cities to fight "the enemy within"⁴ at a President's behest is not one to embolden with more funding.

Trump and Hegseth are also deploying the military, unconstitutionally and dangerously, to carry out assassinations in the Caribbean, with a real risk of entering the U.S in a protracted military engagement without Congressional authorization. Providing additional funding to the Pentagon at such a time would be seen as an implicit endorsement of this reckless activity.

Throwing more money at the Department of War, above the agreed-upon baseline, is contrary to the imperative of opposing this administration's growing authoritarianism.

We urge you to reject the proposed \$32 billion in additional military spending.

¹ https://armedservices.house.gov/uploadedfiles/fy26_ndaa_final.pdf

² <https://www.congress.gov/119/meeting/house/118371/documents/HHRG-119-GO06-20250611-SD004.pdf>

³ <https://www.npr.org/2025/09/06/nx-s1-5532148/national-guard-chicago-baltimore-new-orleans>

⁴ <https://www.npr.org/2025/10/01/nx-s1-5558336/trump-says-u-s-military-should-be-used-to-fight-the-enemy-within>

Signed,

Demand Progress
Eisenhower Media Network
Grassroots Global Justice Alliance
National Priorities Project at the Institute for Policy Studies
Just Foreign Policy
Just Solutions
Peace Action
People's Action
Physicians for Social Responsibility
Public Citizen
Maryknoll Office of Global Concerns
MoveOn
National Association of Social Workers
National Council of Grey Panthers Networks
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas
Union of Concerned Scientists
United Electrical, Radio & Machine Workers of America (UE)
Veterans for Peace
Win Without War
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
World BEYOND War