Message

From: Bahadori, Tina [/O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=7DA7967DCAFB4C5BBC39C666FEE31EC3-BAHADORI, TINA]
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Subject: From: Minority APPROPRIATIONS UPDATE

For Immediate Release:
November 20, 2017
Contact:
Jay Tilton w/Appropriations: (202) 224-2667 Jennifer Talhelm w/ Udall: (202) 228-6870 SUMMARY INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES FISCAL YEAR 2018 APPROPRIATIONS BILL Chairman' s Mark: November 20, 2017

WASHINGTON (Monday, November 20, 2017) – The Senate Appropriations Committee Monday made public the Chairman' s Mark for the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Fiscal Year 2018 Appropriations Bill. The Senate bill recommends $32.536 billion in discretionary funding for agencies funded by the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies bill, which includes
$32.030 billion in discretionary funds and $507 million in emergency funds to pay for wildland firefighting needs. Excluding emergency funding, the amount provided is $250 million below the fiscal year 2017 level and $4.831 billion above the President' s budget request. The bill makes troubling cuts to clean air and water programs and includes a number of policy riders that would weaken the nation' s core laws protecting public health and the environment.
U.S. Senator Tom Udall (D-N.M.), Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, said:
"I deeply regret that we weren' t able to come together and produce a bipartisan bill, because this bill includes many priorities for New Mexico and the nation that I want to support. I especially appreciate that Senator Murkowski worked with me and other members on both sides of the aisle to reject the president' s disastrous proposal to eliminate the National Endowment for the Arts and National Endowment for the Humanities and maintain level funding for each of the endowments. But I can' t look past the deep and damaging cuts to the EPA budget in this bill that put public health at risk. And I can't ignore that it takes aim at the laws that protect our environment and our communities. It' s very disappointing that this bill continues to be the target for unacceptable poison pill policy riders that undercut bedrock environmental laws like the Endangered Species Act and the Clean Water Act. Had we marked up, I would have offered an amendment to restore the EPA's budget and significantly expand other critical Tribal, natural resources and environmental protection programs. It wouldn' t have restored every cut or patched every hole, but it would have responded to the worst funding gaps in the EPA budget, strengthened infrastructure and created jobs."

U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), Vice Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, said:
"I want to thank Chair Murkowski and Ranking Member Udall for their work on this bill. While I am deeply disappointed that the overall bill has bowed to the anti-science know-nothingism of President Trump by slashing environmental programs and denying the reality of climate change, I am glad we were able to secure funding for programs that are vitally important for Lake Champlain and conservation efforts my home state of Vermont.
But this bill falls far short of the funding we need and contains poison pill riders that have no place in the appropriations process. We cannot responsibly fund the government if we do not reach a new bipartisan budget deal that lifts the reckless budget caps, and we must accept the reality of climate change. The consequences of sequestration have been devastating, and we must reach a bipartisan solution.
Key Points & Highlights
· Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Operations. The bill includes unacceptable cuts to EPA' s operating budget, including 10 percent reductions to programs supporting clean water, clean air, enforcement against polluters, and scientific research. The bill even eliminates the Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS), the critical EPA program relied on worldwide for assessments of toxic chemicals. The bill imposes the IRIS workload onto the recently-reformed Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) program, which was not designed to accommodate the breadth of the IRIS program' s responsibilities. The bill also allows EPA to allocate an additional $68 million in program cuts with no restrictions – enabling even further cuts to critical programs without the input of the Appropriations Committee.
Funding is also included to enable the administration to cut a full quarter of EPA' s current staff of scientists and public health experts. Finally, the bill endorses the President' s request to eliminate nearly all of the agency' s climate change programs.
· Water Infrastructure State Revolving Funds. Within the budget for EPA, the bill provides $2.258 billion for the Clean Water and Drinking Water revolving funds, which are provided directly to the states for water and wastewater infrastructure projects. This is the same level of funding provided in fiscal

year 2017 and will help supply Americans with clean drinking water and replace aging sewer systems. The bill focuses new investments on drinking water, which is critical for states and cities working to replace lead service lines and upgrade other aging infrastructure. This funding also supports construction jobs. The bill would result in nearly
1,000 water infrastructure projects, more than 50,000 jobs, and $4.3 billion in matching investments from states. However, the bill offsets these much needed investments with unacceptable cuts to key EPA programs supporting clean water, clean air, climate, and environmental enforcement.

· Wildland Fire Management. The bill provides $3.625 billion to the Forest Service and Interior Department for wildland firefighting, a decrease of $97 million below the fiscal year 2017 level. Within that amount, the bill provides for the forecasted costs estimated by the agencies for fire suppression, which is $507 million more than the President requested. In addition, hazardous fuels reduction is funded at $392.5 million for the Forest Service and $184 million for Interior, a total increase of $6.5 million above the fiscal 2017 level.

· National Park Service. The bill provides $2.942 billion for the National Park Service, an increase of $10 million above the fiscal year 2017 level and an increase of $389 million above the budget request. The bill includes
$221.7 million for national park construction needs, an increase of $12 million above fiscal year 2017. Funding for park operations is reduced by nearly 1 percent compared to fiscal year 2017, though the bill does provide sufficient funding for operations of newly authorized parks and also continues $13 million for grants to protect and preserve important civil rights sites. A total of $20 million is provided for the Centennial Challenge program to match non-Federal investments and fund infrastructure and visitor services needs at parks around the nation.

· Native American Trust Responsibilities. The bill includes $5.040 billion for tribal health programs of the Indian Health Service (IHS), which is flat compared to the fiscal year 2017 level and $302 million above the President's request. The bill restores proposed cuts in the President's request to tribal health programs, including substance abuse and mental health services, and provides $50 million in additional funds not included in the budget request to staff newly constructed facilities. However, the recommendation also forces the Service to absorb current service costs– meaning that most tribal health programs will effectively get cut by inflation. The bill also includes $2.87 billion for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, $7.5 million above the fiscal year 2017 level and $379 million above the President's request. The bill provides fixed costs and small increases to public safety and justice programs, road maintenance, school construction, natural resource programs and some tribal education programs.

· Fish and Wildlife Service. The bill makes an unacceptable cut to the Fish and Wildlife Service's programs supporting the implementation of the Endangered Species Act, reducing funding for listing of species by $3.4 million (16 percent). The bill maintains funding for operations of the National Wildlife Refuge System at the fiscal year 2017 level of $483.9 million, rejecting the President's budget proposal to cut funding for refuges by $13.8 million. Despite cuts proposed in the President's budget request, the bill does provide $1 million more than fiscal year 2017's level in funding for anti-wildlife trafficking programs to better protect elephants, rhinoceroses, tigers, and other iconic species.

· Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). The bill provides a total of
$400 million for land acquisition, conservation easements, and state assistance grants, which is equal to the fiscal year 2017 level and well above the $64 million proposed in the President's request. LWCF is critical for improving recreational access to our federal lands, protecting iconic landscapes, delivering grants to states and local governments to create and protect urban parks and open spaces, and providing farmers and ranchers with easements to allow them to continue to steward their private lands in the face of development pressures.

· Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT). The bill funds payments to counties through the PILT program at a total of $465 million, equal to fiscal year 2017.

· Cultural and Arts Programs. The bill provides a total of $878.4 million for the Smithsonian Institution, which is $15 million above the fiscal year
2017 level. The National Endowments for the Arts and the Humanities, which provide grants to cultural institutions in every state, are each provided
$149.9 million, equal to the fiscal year 2017 level. The President's request proposed terminating the endowments. The National Gallery of Art receives
$156.5 million, an increase of $1 million above last year's level.

Poison Pill Riders

The bill includes a number of troubling policy riders that undermine core environmental protection laws and are unrelated to the Committee's jurisdiction,
including:

· Clean Water. Provides a free pass to rescind and replace federal protections for streams and wetlands by blocking any new rule to define Waters of the United States from being challenged on its merits and exempting EPA from longstanding procedural requirements, weakening public involvement in the regulatory process.

· Forestry Reforms. Couples budgetary reforms for wildland firefighting with major new authorizations that modify environmental requirements for forestry projects, set aside logging restrictions on old-growth trees in the Tongass National Forest, and provide a blanket exemption for Alaska from the Roadless Rule, which prohibits commercial logging and road construction in certain areas, overriding various court decisions.

· Endangered Species Protections. The bill includes several provisions that erode the Endangered Species Act and override court rulings upholding the protections afforded to species under the law, including:
o Reconsultation Requirements. Includes new language that would overturn a court decision that requires federal land managers to reconsult with the Fish and Wildlife Service on land management plans when a new

species is listed, critical habitat is designated, or other new pertinent information on a listed species becomes available. This will result in logging and resource development decisions being made without up-to-date science and species status, which could further imperil threatened or endangered species.
o Gray Wolves. Includes new language that overrides court rulings requiring that specific populations of gray wolves must maintain protections under the Endangered Species Act, circumventing the scientific and legal process established to protect imperiled species.
o Lesser Prairie Chicken. Includes new language that prevents the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service from fulfilling its obligations under the Endangered Species Act. The provision blocks the agency from conducting any activities related to determining if the lesser prairie chicken may be a threatened species, setting a dangerous precedent by circumventing the scientific and legal process established to protect imperiled species.
o Sage Grouse. Continues language that prevents the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service from fulfilling its obligations under the Endangered Species Act. The provision overrides a court requirement that the agency make a determination on whether sage-grouse should be listed as a threatened or endangered species and sets a dangerous precedent by circumventing the scientific and legal process established to protect imperiled species.

· Forest Biomass. Includes language making permanent changes to federal policy on carbon emissions from forest biomass, that shortcuts the scientific process by automatically deeming certain activities as having a neutral impact on climate change.

· Lead Ammunition. Continues language that exempts lead ammunition and fishing tackle from environmental controls under the Toxic Substances Control Act and other environmental laws.

· Yazoo Pumps Reconsideration. New language directing immediate construction of a controversial flood control project, despite the George W. Bush Administration's rejection of the project based on findings that it would significantly degrade municipal water supplies, fisheries, productive bottomland hardwood forests, and wildlife and habitat on tens of thousands of acres of public and private lands. The language would also block any legal challenges and waive all other administrative requirements, such as compliance with the Endangered Species Act.

Udall Amendment

Senator Udall planned to offer a funding amendment to the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies bill that would have increased funding for safe drinking water and clean water infrastructure, to protect natural and cultural resources, fulfill the nation's trust responsibility, and protect science and human health.

The amendment, totaling $3.1 billion, would have been a component of the effort by Committee Democrats to invest in the American people. The Democrats' proposals would ultimately increase defense spending in fiscal year 2018 by $54 billion above post-sequester spending caps, mandated by the Budget Control Act, and provide an equal increase in non-defense programs – a budget and policy approach known as "parity." The text and breakdown of the Udall Amendment is available HERE.

· $1 billion in new funds for water infrastructure, including $500 million for grants to states through EPA Clean Water State Revolving Fund, $380 million for grants to states through EPA Drinking Water State Revolving Fund, and $120 million to fully fund new water lead protection grants authorized through the 2016 Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act.

· $400 million to double investments in Land and Water Conservation Fund, for a total of $800 million.

· $255 million in new funds for Park Service operations and construction.

· $125 million for Forest Service fuels reduction and capital improvements.

· $80 million each in new operating funds for the Fish and Wildlife Service and Bureau of Land Management, including funds to support all existing national monuments.

· $18 million in new funding to fully fund county payments through the Payments in Lieu of Taxes program.

· $404 million in new funds for tribal health priorities through the Indian Health Service to cover current service requirements and expand clinical programs.

· $171 million in new funds for construction of tribal health facilities.

· $200 million for new funds for core program needs at the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Bureau of Indian Education, including education, public safety and law enforcement, natural resources programs and broadband capacity development.

· $50 million for construction of tribal schools.

· $25 million to fund additional tribal land and water claims settlements.

· $200 million to restore proposed cuts within the bill to EPA's core research and regulatory programs, including fully restoring funding eliminated in the base bill for the IRIS program and protecting the TSCA program from being overwhelmed by new responsibilities outside the scope of its current authorities.

· $79 million to fully fund need museum repairs at the Smithsonian Institution.

· $25 million in grants to states to fund historic preservation needs, including brick and mortar projects through the Save America's Treasures program.

· $17.5 million each in new funds for grants to state arts and humanities councils through the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities.