

Wittman: We must get our nation's fiscal house in order

WASHINGTON – Congressman Rob Wittman (VA-01) released this statement after voting “no” on the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2019:

“It is imperative that we get our nation’s fiscal house in order and work to address our debt and deficit – or else we continue to push the problems of today onto our children and grandchildren. The longer we fail to address our nation’s spending problem, the harder it becomes to solve the problem of our country’s crippling debt. I have long advocated for budgetary certainty for our military and federal agencies, but by approving this legislation we are risking our long-term fiscal solvency – putting the health of these very institutions at risk.

“Today, the House was forced to vote on a budget deal that raises spending caps above current levels by over \$300 billion and temporarily suspends the debt ceiling. The federal deficit for the fiscal year 2020 is already set to hit a staggering \$1.10 trillion. To make matters worse, this budget agreement will add nearly \$2 trillion to the federal debt over the next 10 years.

“I’m extremely concerned about increased domestic spending levels and suspending the debt ceiling without addressing the fundamental problem of our nation’s runaway, autopilot spending. However, if we are forced to increase federal spending, it is imperative we do so with an equal dollar amount of offsets. The White House proposed [\\$574 billion](#) in potential cuts, but only \$77.3 billion were included. Of those cuts included, none were structural changes but instead gimmicks with savings not realized until the ninth and tenth year of the budget window.

“We absolutely must take tangible steps to reduce our deficit and debt. While we can certainly start with eliminating duplicative programs, wasteful spending, and fraud, if we don’t address the broken budget and appropriation system producing these spending deals we won’t ever solve this problem. Returning to regular order will go a long way towards bringing transparency back to the budget and appropriations process. However, this requires holding Members of Congress accountable. I have three bills to achieve this: the No Budget No Pay Act that withholds Member pay if a budget isn’t passed by April 15; the Stay on Schedule Resolution that requires the House to stay in session through August – which many Members use as vacation – if all appropriations bills are not passed by the end of July; and finally the Inaction Has Consequences Act that withholds Member pay if all 12 appropriations bills are not completed by the end of the fiscal year. This level of transparency and accountability is critical not only to get the budget process under control but also to rein in wasteful spending.

“It is important to note that this legislation does end the threat of sharp defense budget cuts that were scheduled to go into effect January 1st – something I wholeheartedly support and have continued to fight for. However, the topline funding level for defense is well below the request of the Department of Defense and would include only a .3 percent increase in 2021, ignoring the 3-5 percent real growth former Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Joseph

Dunford have stated is necessary to preserve the competitive advantage the United States has today. This is unacceptable. Throughout my time serving the First District in Congress, I have fought to secure on-time, reliable funding for our national defense and ensure our men and women in uniform have the proper training and equipment to carry out their mission and return home safely. I find it disheartening that Democrats continue to hold defense spending increases hostage for non-defense spending increases, today was no exception. Regardless, Congress must now provide adequate and timely funding in the upcoming FY20 Defense Appropriations bill to be considered later in the year.

“We have a lot of work to do to get this fiscal crisis under control and to make sure we don’t burden future generations; it should not be their job to clean up this mess. We need to cancel August recess, go back to the negotiating table, and reach a responsible budget agreement that benefits the American people.”

Congressman Rob Wittman represents the 1st District of Virginia. He serves on the House Natural Resources Committee and the House Armed Services Committee, where he serves as the ranking member of the Seapower and Projection Forces Subcommittee.

###

www.Wittman.house.gov

