



Office of the Mayor

CONSENT CALENDAR
September 12, 2017

To: Honorable Members of the City Council

From: Mayor Jesse Arreguín and Councilmembers Kate Harrison and Benjamin Bartlett

Subject: Oppose the National Defense Authorization Act

RECOMMENDATIONS

Adopt a Resolution opposing S 1519 and HR 2810, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018. Send a Letter to Senators Dianne Feinstein and Kamala Harris.

BACKGROUND

The Berkeley City Council has a long history of supporting federal budget proposals that promote peace in our community and abroad. President Trump's military budget, the National Defense Authorization Act for FY2018 (NDAA), does the opposite by necessitating harsh cuts to social welfare programs and increasing U.S. involvement in foreign wars.

President Trump called for defense spending of \$639 billion (a \$20.3 billion increase) in his budget request, yet Congress felt that the increase was insufficient: S 1519 increases defense spending by \$61 billion on top of Trump's budget request, and HR 2810 increases defense spending by \$57.5 billion more.

Historically, massive increases in defense spending have led to cuts in non-defense discretionary spending, disproportionately harming low-income and marginalized people. The NDAA is no exception: it proposes the elimination of critical services such as the Community Development Block Grant and the HOME Investment Partnerships program as well as severe reductions in Medicaid and SNAP. These vital programs assist thousands of Berkeley residents, and their reduction would be devastating for our community.

The NDAA also facilitates the expansion of the U.S. military and intelligence agencies in countries the U.S. has conducted airstrikes since September 11, 2001—namely Libya, Pakistan, the Philippines, Somalia, Syria, and Yemen. Bombing campaigns, drone strikes, the deployment of special operations forces and mass surveillance in these countries are counterproductive measures that kill thousands, displace tens of millions and enact psychological violence, devastating civilian populations and fomenting instability. Additionally, President Trump has threatened a “military option” against Iran and Venezuela and even suggested a preemptive nuclear strike against North Korea.

Beyond increases in military spending, the NDAA is flawed due to the process by which HR 2810 was crafted. The leadership of the House of Representatives removed Rep. Barbara Lee's amendment to repeal the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force without abiding by the normal democratic process on the Rules Committee. Congress should repeal the 2001 AUMF, which has been used to justify numerous conflicts entirely unrelated to the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, and the unilateral decision by House leadership to remove Rep. Barbara Lee's amendment is worrisome.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

No adverse effects to the environment.

CONTACT PERSON

Jesse Arreguin, Mayor 510-981-7100

Attachment:

1. Resolution
2. Letter to Senators Diane Feinstein and Kamala Harris

RESOLUTION NO. ##,###-N.S.

OPPOSING THE NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2018

WHEREAS, since the Great Recession of 2008, the California state budget has diminished funding in areas such as housing, in-home supportive services and public education; and

WHEREAS, President Obama's average Pentagon budget was nearly \$30 billion more than President George W. Bush's average Pentagon budget, representing a significant increase in military spending; and

WHEREAS, in 2016, 49 cents of every tax dollar spent by the Federal Government on discretionary appropriations paid for national defense, including past, present and future wars and military operations; and

WHEREAS, the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria alone have already cost in excess of \$4 trillion; and

WHEREAS, historically massive increases in defense spending have led to cuts in non-defense discretionary spending, disproportionately harming low-income and marginalized people, such as the Community Development Block Grant, the HOME Investment Partnerships program, Medicaid and SNAP; and

WHEREAS, these vital programs assist thousands of Berkeley residents, and their reduction would be devastating for our community; and

WHEREAS, spending on wars since September 11, 2001 has increased the national debt by substantially more than \$1 trillion and the resulting interest payments will add trillions more to the national debt in the coming decades; and

WHEREAS, U.S. military action since September 11, 2001 in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Pakistan, the Philippines, Somalia, Syria and Yemen has contributed to the loss of the priceless lives of more than 6900 U.S. troops, more than 100,000 U.S. troops wounded, the deaths of more than one million civilians, the displacement of tens of millions of civilians and incalculable psychological violence; and

WHEREAS, U.S. military intervention through bombings, drone strikes, the deployment of ground troops as well as special operations forces and mass surveillance has uniformly increased instability, with global deaths from terrorism growing by more than 4,000 percent between 2002 and 2014 in part due to U.S. interventions creating power vacuums, destroying civilian infrastructure and inadvertently providing insurgent groups with weapons, vehicles and propaganda for recruitment.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Berkeley that it hereby opposes S. 1519 and HR 2810.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of the Resolution be sent to President Trump, Senators Dianne Feinstein and Kamala Harris, and Representative Barbara Lee.

Dear Senator Kamala Harris,

The Berkeley City Council requests that you oppose S.1519.

As you know, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018 would increase defense spending by more than 10 percent, even exceeding funding levels in President Trump's budget request. A defense spending increase of this magnitude establishes a pretext for gutting social welfare programs and is a prescription for more warfare abroad.

This bill is intended to significantly boost defense spending such that non-defense discretionary spending will have to be slashed. Spending cuts will target programs in education, environmental protection, healthcare, housing and nutritional assistance that support the most vulnerable in society such as the Community Development Block Grant, Medicaid and SNAP. The results will be catastrophic for poor people: further increasing costs of living at the same time as defunding subsidies that help people pay their bills. By contrast, the wealthiest Americans and corporations are likely to see their largest tax reductions in decades. Moreover, the House bill allows the Pentagon to fund President Trump's border wall, a monument to isolationism and xenophobia that is a waste of taxpayer money.

The bill authorizes increases in troop levels, acquisitions of military equipment and the Overseas Contingency Operations fund, enabling the Trump administration to deepen U.S. involvement in wars abroad. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan must be brought to a swift conclusion, as the Berkeley City Council has stated repeatedly in recent years. It is unacceptable that Rep. Barbara Lee's amendment to repeal the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force was removed undemocratically by House leadership, without the consent of the Rules Committee.

Other military conflicts justified by the 2001 AUMF should also be halted, including bombing campaigns, drone strikes and deployment of special operations forces in Libya, Pakistan, Somalia, Syria and Yemen. The path forward to creating global stability does not involve killing tens or hundreds of thousands of people and displacing millions more. Furthermore, allegations of potential violations of international law committed by the U.S. and coalition forces such as the October 2015 bombing of a hospital in Kunduz, Afghanistan and the June 2017 use of white phosphorus in Mosul, Iraq and Raqqa, Syria should be thoroughly investigated rather than rewarded with skyrocketing budget increases.

More worrisome still, President Trump has expressed a willingness to begin a new war with Iran, Venezuela or North Korea, stating that military options are on the table. Increasing defense spending bolsters President Trump's confidence that war with Iran or North Korea would be quick and easy.

Redirection of resources currently being used by the Department of Defense to wage wars abroad is urgently needed, and such a redirection would be of great importance to the City of Berkeley. We thank you for your continued service to the State of California and the nation.

Sincerely,

The Berkeley City Council

Dear Senator Dianne Feinstein,

The Berkeley City Council requests that you oppose S.1519.

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