

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 31, 2013

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Chairman
Budget Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairwoman
Budget Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
Ranking Member
Budget Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jeff Sessions
Ranking Member
Budget Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Ryan, Chairwoman Murray, Ranking Member Sessions, and Ranking Member Van Hollen:

As you begin to conference the FY 2014 budget resolution in earnest, we are writing to urge you to make reaching an agreement on the FY 2014 and FY 2015 discretionary spending caps your first priority. You are undoubtedly faced with decisions on many issues, but, as you well know, our ability to conference the FY 2014 appropriations bills is dependent upon your arriving at an FY 2014 302(a) overall discretionary number that is common to both the House and the Senate.

The December 13 budget conference target date leaves only a month to conference the 12 appropriations bills, pass them in the House and the Senate, and have them signed into law before the current Continuing Resolution expires. It is expected that either the House or the Senate will be out of session for three out of those four weeks. While both the House and Senate Appropriations Committees will try with all of our might to meet this tight deadline, it is clear that a much better product would result with additional time for Members to conference these critical bills. Therefore, we ask that you come together and decide on a common topline as quickly as possible to allow us additional time for the Appropriations Committees to perform essential analyses, consider the views of House and Senate members, and protect the interests of the American taxpayers in our final negotiations.

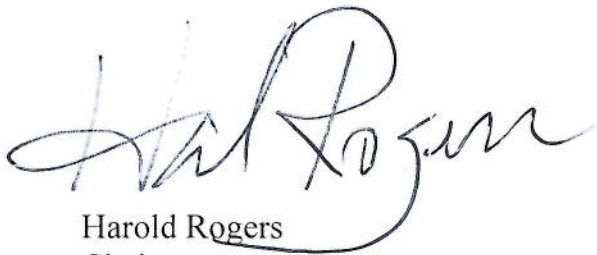
Specifically, we ask that the budget conference, under your leadership, endeavor to agree on a common overall discretionary number by no later than December 2 and preferably by November 22, prior to Thanksgiving, to allow the Appropriations Committees of the House and Senate to begin their much-delayed work of coming to a conclusion on the FY 2014 spending bills.

We also ask that a common overall discretionary number for FY 2015 be part of the agreement, so that we can avoid the situation we encountered this year of having two different overall numbers guiding the House and the Senate appropriations process. This would provide for the return to regular order – a goal to which we remain strongly committed. The House and the Senate should mark-up and pass the 12 appropriations bills for the next fiscal year in a timely way, proceed to conference, send each of the individual bills to the President and avoid yet another budget crisis or “shutdown showdown.”

We believe that if an agreement on a discretionary spending number can be reached early, it will allow for more thoughtful and responsible spending decisions, set the parameters for the budgetary savings that need to be reached in your Budget conference, and build momentum for a larger budget agreement that addresses the nation’s wide range of fiscal challenges.

We look forward to working with you to achieve these goals in a timely manner.

Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Harold Rogers".

Harold Rogers
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Barbara Mikulski".

Barbara Mikulski
Chairwoman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate