



Chairman Hal Rogers

House Committee on Appropriations

Fiscal Year 2015 Financial Services and General Government Appropriations Bill June 25, 2014 Opening Statement As Prepared

Good morning. Thank you all for being here and ready to work this morning.

We meet today to consider the Fiscal Year 2015 Financial Services and General Government Appropriations bill, our tenth bill to move through the process.

I anticipate that many of you will have much to say on this bill, so I kindly ask that you keep your remarks as short as possible, and be respectful of this Committee's standards of decorum.

I would like to congratulate Chairman Crenshaw and Ranking Member Serrano on successfully bringing this bill to the Committee today.

Your hard work and your commitment to working together highlight what I've long believed to be the hallmarks of this great Committee. I am grateful to you, the Subcommittee, and your staff for bringing this bill before us today so that we can continue our forward momentum.

The Financial Services and General Government bill covers a vast array of important programs and services – including the Treasury, our small businesses, and the judiciary.

In total, this legislation provides \$21.3 billion in funding for these agencies - \$566 million below last year's levels.

The bill makes serious strides to rein in poor-performing agencies and to increase accountability across the government. The bill includes strong terms and conditions on funding, and makes agencies face the scrutiny of Congress and the appropriations process. The bill also makes cuts to lower-priority programs that have proven to be less than careful with precious tax dollars.

I'd like to highlight some of this bill's priorities:

Enforcing our laws is one of our top priorities in this bill. To continue all federal court activities at a timely and efficient rate, funding for the federal Judiciary is increased by 2.5 percent above enacted levels.

We also target funding to enforce our drug laws and to battle drug abuse. For instance, we provide \$245 million for High-Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas – an increase above the President's request for this important and effective program. The bill also increases funding for the Drug-Free Communities program above the request, helping improve access to successful community-based prevention and treatment initiatives.

Investing in America's small businesses is also a priority in this bill. In total, the bill contains \$862 million for the Small Business Administration to help our small businesses prosper and create more American jobs.

However, as I said earlier, to reduce spending in this bill – a cut of 2.6 percent less than last year – tough choices had to be made.

For example, the budget for the IRS has been reduced by \$1.5 billion below the President's request. This funding is sufficient for the agency to perform its core duties, but will require IRS management to make better and more efficient choices.

We also placed many oversight requirements and funding prohibitions on the agency – the result of its previous improper use of taxpayer dollars and its inappropriate actions targeting groups based on political beliefs. These include prohibitions on the production of inappropriate videos and conferences, and on giving employees bonuses or awards unless their professional conduct is given consideration.

The bill also prohibits funding for the implementation of a proposed, new regulation to determine tax-exempt status under section 501(c)(4) – a troubling proposal that has the potential for infringement on Americans' First Amendment rights.

And the bill prohibits funding for the IRS to implement the individual health care mandate, created by ObamaCare, on the American people.

There has been so much chaos and confusion on the operation of Obamacare and so many last-minute changes to the implementation, how can we possibly allow the IRS to fine American citizens even if they try to comply with this dysfunctional law? Regardless of your personal beliefs on the value and legitimacy of the Affordable Care Act, it is simply unfair and unjust to get a visit from the tax collectors because of this Administration's botched rollout of the law.

Lastly, the bill increases the transparency of the federal government by bringing the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and the Office of Financial Research under the congressional appropriations process.

These provisions, along with the strict oversight mandated in the bill, will force these agencies to be more transparent and accountable to the American people. This is a good bill that will streamline these agencies, force them to act within the bounds of our laws, respect American taxpayers, and live within a fiscally responsible budget.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill today.

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