Fiscal Year 2016 Financial Services and General Government Appropriations Bill
Subcommittee Markup
June 11, 2015
Opening Statement As Prepared

Good morning, and thank you for yielding, Mr. Chairman. I congratulate you and Ranking Member Serrano for bringing forward the Fiscal Year 2016 Financial Services and General Government appropriations bill. The two of you and the staff on both sides have worked tirelessly to produce this bill, which covers a wide array of important yet diverse programs within our federal government.

Specifically, the bill includes discretionary funding totaling just over $20.2 billion, which is a reduction of 6.1 percent below the current enacted level. These reductions were necessary to comply with the budgetary caps set forth in the Budget Control Act, as well as to keep true to the Republican promise to reduce the size and scope of the federal government. The bill before us today strikes an appropriate balance by prioritizing important programs that provide critical services to the American people and reducing others that are poor-performing and nonessential.

As Chairman Crenshaw noted, the legislation continues the committee's strong commitment to essential law enforcement functions. In particular, we once again reject the President's massive cut to the High-Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas program and instead fund the HIDTAs at $250 million, which is a $57 million increase above the request and $5 million above the current enacted level. HIDTAs provide a critically important function in the regions of our country completely besieged by illegal drug trafficking and abuse. As we continue to fight the scourge of prescription drug abuse in Southern and Eastern Kentucky, the Appalachian HIDTA has been a valued partner in combating this unique law enforcement and public health crisis – and I know other regions around the country are beginning to suffer from the effects of this growing epidemic. For this reason, I am also pleased that this bill funds the Drug-Free Communities program at $95 million, roughly $10 million above the President's request, so that we can increase access to successful community-based prevention and treatment initiatives. As we see an increase in opioid abuse around the country, these initiatives are as critical as ever.

Other areas of importance include funding for financial programs that support the development of small businesses. Within the Small Business Administration, the bill increases funding for entrepreneurial development programs while also fully funding the business loans account, HUBZones, Women's Business Centers, and Veterans' Outreach program. Furthermore, this bill includes robust funding for the Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) Fund. Taken together, these programs can provide a lifeline for communities struggling to generate economic opportunities and jobs. As the nation's economic recovery moves slowly along, they are critically important in regions that continue to lag behind the national average in unemployment.

Additionally, this legislation continues to rein in agencies that have not been adequately performing on behalf of the taxpayer. In addition to funding cuts for the IRS, there are numerous provisions and reporting requirements that will provide Congress with strong oversight over these agencies in order for us to continue to weed out waste, fraud, and abuse. Furthermore, the bill brings two agencies that have been instrumental in implementing Dodd-Frank under the appropriations process in Fiscal Year 2017. Having the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and the Office of Financial Research under the annual appropriations process will provide Congress and the American people much needed oversight and transparency of these powerful agencies.

Finally, during this time of monumental deficits and skyrocketing debt, this bill terminates several programs and focuses on oversight and management. This is a good bill, and I am proud to support it. I urge my colleagues to do the same. Thank you and I yield back.

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