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**Testimony to House Armed Services Committee “Member Day Hearing on the FY2022
National Defense Authorization Act”
Congressman Mark Pocan
05.05.2021**

Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Rogers, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony to the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) as you develop the Fiscal Year 2022 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

President Biden has proposed a \$753 billion FY2020 defense budget—a \$13 billion increase over the FY2021 defense budget. In America today, we are experiencing an extraordinary series of crises unprecedented in the modern history of our country, but none require an increase in spending for the Department of Defense.

Over the last year, the COVID-19 pandemic has infected more than 32 million Americans and caused over 574,000 deaths. Sadly, this pandemic has killed more people than World War I, World War II, the Korean War, The Iraq War, the War in Afghanistan, the Gulf War and 9/11 combined. Over 550,000 people are collecting unemployment assistance every week, 18 million people are going hungry, and over 10 million people are on the brink of eviction.

As we finally begin to see a path towards recovery and an end to this pandemic, we have a duty to the American people to demand a change in our national priorities. We must cut the Pentagon’s excessively large budget and reinvest that money in jobs, education, healthcare, and housing in American communities.

For too long, American national security has been defined by the amount of money we spend on forever wars abroad or the number of American soldiers deployed globally. It’s time we invest in what actually makes the American people safer—job security, healthcare security, education security, and housing security.

The Pentagon’s budget grew by over \$100 billion, almost 20%, under President Donald Trump. The blank checks Congress writes to the Pentagon has time and time again been thrown at ineffective weapons, outdated technology, and lucrative private defense contracts—with little to no oversight.

Huntington Ingalls’ \$13.2 billion Ford class aircraft carrier has a launch system that consistently fails, and the toilets on board frequently cost \$400,000 to flush specialized acids down the literal drain. Defense contractors like Boeing, Lockheed Martin, and United Technologies have paid over \$3 billion in fines or settlements for fraud or misconduct, and the Pentagon has rewarded

them with \$1 trillion in contracts over the last two decades alone. From 2010 to 2012, out of 3,000 Defense Department contracts made in Afghanistan worth \$106 billion, about 40 percent of the money ended up in the pockets of insurgents, criminal syndicates or corrupt Afghan officials. The Pentagon itself commissioned an internal study that found \$125 billion in bureaucratic waste at the DoD—then buried it from the public.

Congress continues to increase the Defense Department's budget when it cannot even complete an audit. The American people across the political spectrum agree that it's time to cut the defense budget. In a Data for Progress poll from 2020, 56 percent of voters support cutting the defense budget by 10 percent to pay for priorities like fighting the coronavirus, education, healthcare & housing—including 50 percent of Republicans.

Our defense budget is larger than the next 10 countries—China, India, Russia, Saudi Arabia, France, Germany, United Kingdom, Japan, South Korea, and Brazil—combined. Cutting such a disproportionately large budget will not make our nation any less safe, but it will remind us that our foreign policy should be rooted in diplomacy and peace, instead of more wars and bombs.

I believe America is only as safe as its people at home feel, and right now with rampant unemployment, millions losing healthcare, underfunded education, and families facing eviction—the American people need our help. Given these unprecedented crises, now is not the time to increase the Pentagon's budget to \$753 billion – it's time to invest in the American people's jobs, education, healthcare, and housing.

Thank you.



Mark Pocan

Member of Congress

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NDAA polling

Re-up