

May 15, 2015
Statement of Congressman Gerald E. Connolly (VA-11)
H.R. 1735, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016

For 53 years, Congress has passed a National Defense Authorization Act with bipartisan support. I have always favored a strong and robust military, and my district is proud of the considerable contributions it makes to the nation's defense.

Sadly, the Republicans have passed a draconian and unworkable budget that puts us in a straightjacket. They have entered into a Faustian bargain that pits domestic investments versus defense investments, and it is only through the use of a disingenuous budget mechanism – the multi-billion dollar plus up of the Overseas Contingency Operations Fund – that they seek to circumvent sequestration funding caps. I refuse to accept that choice. We can and must end sequestration and make the security, defense, and domestic investments necessary to keep this country safe and strong.

Adding insult to injury, House Republicans have adopted an amendment that precludes immigrants who have chosen to serve our nation from obtaining a path to legal status. This cynical measure represents values counter to everything I believe about my country.

It is for these reasons, sadly, I cannot support H.R. 1735, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016.