



Chairman Hal Rogers

House Committee on Appropriations

Conference Meeting Military Construction and Veterans Affairs/Zika Response Appropriations Acts June 15, 2016

Thank you to everyone for being here today, our first formal Conference meeting since 2011. Granted, I would have liked more “regular order” and to have been at this table across from my good friends in the Senate many times over the last several years, but regardless, I’m glad we are here today.

I look forward to starting the critical final work of funding our military infrastructure, veterans programs, and the vital efforts that will combat the spread of the dangerous Zika virus.

I’d like to thank Ranking Member Lowey for all of her hard work so far this year. She has been a great partner and I appreciate her efforts to keep this process collegial and productive. As we begin conference negotiations on this bill, I know that we both have the best interests of the country in mind, and I look forward to continuing to work together as we advance this bill forward.

I also want to thank our Senate counterparts. Chairman Cochran, thank you for being here today. Your decades of experience and wide knowledge will bring a great benefit to this Conference, and it is a pleasure to be at the table with you once again.

I’d also like to thank Ranking Member Mikulski. She and I have also been at a conference table together before, many times, and it is great to be with her here again today. As you all know she’s a tough lady, but has always been a solid partner when it comes to getting our work done.

It is a testament to all of your leadership that we are all coming together in this conference to iron out our issues and send this legislation to the President’s desk.

Here, at the onset of this conference, I will state unequivocally that it is imperative that we complete our negotiations quickly. With mosquito season upon us, these Zika dollars must get out the door now to help control the spread of this disease. In addition, funds are needed immediately to continue longer term efforts to stop this disease, such as vaccine and treatment development and deployment.

Just as significant is the Military-Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations legislation, which is one of the most important bills Congress considers every year. It funds the infrastructure and services our active duty troops and their families need, and fulfills our commitment to those who have fought and sacrificed for our nation – providing our veterans with the health care and other benefits they deserve.

As we start this Conference, it is also essential that we remain vigilant in our stewardship of the “power of the purse.” We must hold federal agencies accountable for each and every tax dollar

they spend, ensure that they are acting within the bounds of the law and the direction of this body, and to continue to find savings wherever possible.

It is in this vein – and in the vein of the tradition of this committee of working collegially and productively together – that I hope and expect we will conduct this conference.

As I mentioned, time is of the essence. This conference can and should be completed in short order, so that we can get approval in both Chambers and send this legislation to the White House. So, I would urge that we get to work right away to resolve our differences as soon as possible.

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