September 6, 2016

Dear Speaker Ryan and Leaders McConnell, Pelosi, and Reid:

We are writing on behalf of Research!America and the Aerospace Industries Association (AIA) in regard to the fiscal year 2017 (FY17) appropriations process. We commend the progress you have made and urge you to remain committed to completing your work rather than defaulting to a long-term continuing resolution (CR).

The House and Senate Appropriations Committees have each passed all 12 appropriations bills, a particularly impressive achievement in the context of the elections and the ever-growing complexity of federal funding decisions. Despite this achievement and the months of hard work it reflects, some members of Congress and outside groups have suggested abandoning the appropriations process in favor of a long-term CR. Under this scenario, Congress would abdicate its responsibility to craft a budget grounded in the current opportunities and challenges facing our nation, and instead lock in FY16 funding until at least March of 2017. We urge you to ensure that FY17 funding decisions are crafted to advance the best interests of the American people and the strategic interests of the United States.

No priorities more concretely meet these imperatives than sustaining a strong and nimble national defense and rebuilding the inflation-eroded budget of the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

The challenges that American leadership faces throughout the world remain daunting. Our Commander-in-Chief recently announced his intention to keep slightly higher troop levels in Afghanistan. The situations in Turkey and Syria require tempered vigilance. Each passing day brings renewed cyber challenges from state sponsored hackers. We must also deal with Russian assertiveness in eastern Europe and China’s territorial claims in the South China Sea. North Korea and Iran are constantly probing for collective security weaknesses. Congress has recognized and responded appropriately to these national security challenges by putting the FY 17 Defense authorization act into conference and by marking up the companion defense appropriations bill in both the House and Senate. This is exactly the wrong time to permit detailed FY 17 policy and program decisions to gather dust and create uncertainty. Congress can seize the moment and reassure our troops and allies regarding America’s grit and resolve. A long-term or extended CR will send the wrong message about our intent to deal appropriately with current and looming national security challenges.

Turning back to the domestic side, because of your vision and commitment, the FY16 Omnibus Appropriations bill increased the NIH budget by 6 percent or $2 billion. If our nation builds on that pivotal accomplishment, we can defeat illnesses that rob Americans of health, hope, and time. The House and Senate Appropriations Committees embraced this challenge, passing bills containing significant increases to FY17 NIH funding ($2 billion and $1.25 billion, respectively). A long-term CR would undercut that funding growth, choking off unprecedented progress against deadly and debilitating health threats.

We are confident that under your leadership, the 114th Congress can complete the FY17 appropriations process this year without resorting to a long-term CR. Research!America and the Aerospace Industries
Association stand ready to assist and support your efforts. Thank you and your respective staff members for your commitment and diligence.

Sincerely,

Mary Woolley  
President and CEO  
Research!America

David F. Melcher  
President and CEO  
Aerospace Industries Association

Cc: Chairman Cochran  
Vice Chairwoman Mikulski  
Chairman Rogers  
Ranking Member Lowey