

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 13, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran, Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader McConnell and Chairman Cochran:

We are writing to express our interest in working with you to complete action on bipartisan legislation to fund the federal government for the remainder of the fiscal year.

As you know, funding for the government will expire on April 28th unless Congress acts. Fortunately, there is no reason why the two parties should not be able to resolve our differences before then. Under the bipartisan budget agreement reached in 2015, the Congress has already agreed to the spending levels for defense and non-defense programs. We also agreed that any extra funding (beyond that for legitimate Overseas Contingency Operations and emergency expenses) should be divided equally between defense and non-defense priorities. Finally, we agreed that bills to fund the government should not be filled with poison pill riders.

We remain committed to complying with these principles and are encouraged that bicameral, bipartisan negotiations continue in an effort to reach an agreement consistent with the 2015 Bipartisan Budget Act. However, we want to reiterate our position that all 12 appropriations bills should be completed and they should not include poison pill riders such as those that roll back protections for our veterans, environment, consumers, and workers and prohibit funds for critical healthcare services for women through Planned Parenthood. We strongly oppose the inclusion of such riders in any of the must-pass appropriations bills that fund the government.

We are also concerned with reports that there may be an effort to include funding for a very expensive new wall along the southern border with Mexico and a “deportation force.” According to non-partisan experts, the proposed new border wall could cost as much as \$25 million per mile and raises considerable issues that have not been resolved by the Congress or the Department of Homeland Security. First, many experts believe that such a border wall will not work. Second, there is real concern that the Administration, put simply, has no plan to build the border wall. For example, the Administration has not detailed how to 1) use eminent domain and other procedures to acquire land from private landowners and Native American tribes, 2) design the wall, 3) locate the wall, 4) construct the wall, and 5) require Mexico to pay for the wall given the President’s clear and repeated promises that he would force Mexico to do so. Finally, there are objections to the construction of a wall from Democratic and Republican members of Congress that represent border states. Given these and other concerns, we believe it would be inappropriate to insist on the inclusion of such funding in a must-pass appropriations

bill that is needed for the Republican majority in control of the Congress to avert a government shutdown so early in President Trump's Administration.

Thank you for your consideration of our views. We look forward to working with you in the weeks ahead.

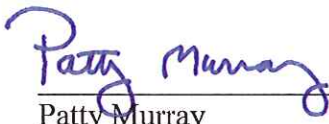
Sincerely,



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



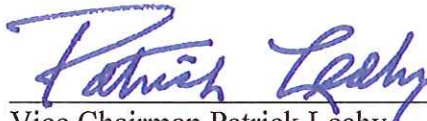
Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Patty Murray
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator



Vice Chairman Patrick Leahy
United States Senator