

Our Nation's Checkbook Sign-on Letter

Dear Senator Nelson,

We know that, as a member of the Senate Budget Committee, you are acutely aware of the importance of setting clear priorities for federal spending. We are writing out of concern that for too long the Pentagon budget has been rising out of proportion to other parts of the federal budget. We see real needs here in Florida that could use some of the federal attention and tax dollars that are routinely diverted to military spending.

This year Congress approved a budget of \$687 billion for the Pentagon, nuclear weapons and war. This is far more than at any other time since World War II, and the Pentagon budget is expected to increase by another 25% over the next 10 years, not including the wars.

Taxpayers in Florida contributed a whopping \$38.6 billion toward the total defense spending in fiscal year 2010. As a community and as a country we cannot go on spending money at this rate. Instead of spending another \$38.6 billion on war over the next 10 years, I hope you will work to invest those funds in real security. For example, \$38.6 billion would pay for hiring new diplomats trained in conflict prevention, would provide health care for over 21 million children for one year, or would provide renewable energy to power over 27 million homes for one year.

As Defense Secretary Robert Gates has acknowledged, the Pentagon is not the only agency involved in national security. Real security means much more than military interventions around the world. We need more attention to the kind of security that keeps us safe at home and around the world.

We hope you will advocate for the Budget Committee to hold a set of hearings this coming year on how our government can fully fund efforts to expand real security in three areas.

Fund Real Security-- Diplomacy, Development and International Cooperation:

Many of our national leaders have said Congress needs to dramatically increase funding for trained diplomats who can help address conflicts before they turn violent, expand foreign aid programs that can prevent the root causes of violent conflicts, and support international agencies with a proven record of addressing international conflicts.

Fund Real Security -- Protecting the Environment to Protect Ourselves: Greenhouse gas emissions threaten our air and water supplies and access to declining natural resources is a source of conflict. Scientists have identified specific strategies to reduce greenhouse gas pollution, increase energy efficiency, and create jobs through investments in green industries. Congress should expand funding for these efforts.

Fund Real Security -- Human Needs: The recent economic crisis dramatically reduced funding for many critical state expenditures that are dedicated to issues such as poverty reduction, health care, housing, and education. These investments are critical to the long-term security of our nation, especially this year when our state government must cut back

in programs to address our state deficit. And yet the FY 2010 federal budget is scheduled to cut over 20% of federal aid to Florida.

As concerned Floridians of diverse backgrounds, we ask that you address our security needs strategically and effectively. The military, which consumes too much of our wealth, cannot be the only lens with which we assess our well-being. We appeal to you to work with your colleagues on the Senate Budget Committee to redirect money away from the Pentagon and toward these other pressing priorities.

We look forward to hearing from you and your staff and setting up a personal follow-up meeting with you.

Sincerely,