

TAXPAYER GROUPS JOIN FORCES ON NDAA AMENDMENTS

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July 10, 2019

As groups concerned with the interests of American taxpayers, we write regarding two amendments to H.R. 2500, the National Defense Authorization bill that should be of interest to all Members of Congress who take seriously the problem of cronyism in government contracting.

We support Rep. Huffman's amendment #42 (introduced as #447) that "amends Section 2831 to restrict any energy sourced from Russia and repeals another Section from FY19 NDAA dealing with preference for domestic sources at one specific European base." This amendment will end the infamous "Coal to Kaiserslautern" provision that has effectively forced the Pentagon to ship coal across the Atlantic Ocean to fuel a particular military facility in Germany. The Pentagon should be allowed to determine how to meet their energy needs in the most cost-effective and secure manner and not micromanaged at one facility.

Successful floor amendments on Department of Defense appropriations bills in both 2015 and 2016 struck the provisions continuing this wasteful decades-long program. It began, on a much larger scale, in 1961. But although its scope has narrowed over the years, the requirement persisted in the FY2016 and FY2017 Pentagon spending bills. Bipartisan amendments to strike these provisions won handily. In 2015 the vote was 252 in favor and 159 opposed. In 2016 the vote was 268 in favor and 153 opposed. A version of this provision was unfortunately resurrected in the Fiscal Year 2019 Pentagon authorization bill. This amendment would repeal that provision.

Our position is the Pentagon should be allowed to fuel this particular military facility as it does every other, without Congress continuing this backdoor earmark that has been in place, in one form or another, for more than 50 years.

Unfortunately, there is also an amendment included in the Rule that we believe imposes improper protectionist restrictions on Pentagon decision makers. We believe that the warfighter should always be given the best equipment, no matter where it is produced. This amendment reflects the worst type of crony capitalism.

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We oppose Rep. Brindisi and Rep. McKinley's amendment #9 (introduced as #133) that would make stainless steel flatware and dinnerware subject to the Berry Amendment's domestic sourcing requirement and provide a one year phase-in period.

We agree with the views of then-House Armed Services Committee Chairman Thornberry (R-TX) when he spoke against a similar amendment in 2017. He said, in part, "*We cannot go down the road of adding category after category after category of items to help our districts at the expense of our troops and the best use of dollars when it is not a matter of vital national security. I just don't think that the knives and forks we use qualify as vital national security.*" The amendment was defeated then, and we believe it should be defeated again.

We urge you to consider the interests of American taxpayers in your votes on these two amendments.

Campaign for Liberty

Coalition to Reduce Spending

National Taxpayers Union

Taxpayers for Common Sense

Taxpayers Protection Alliance