

So I'm going to be vetoing this authorization bill. I'm going to be sending it back to Congress. And my message to them is very simple: Let's do this right. We're in the midst of budget discussions. Let's have a budget that properly funds our national security as well as economic security. Let's make sure that we're able, in a constructive way, to reform our military spending to make it sustainable over the long term. And let's make sure that, in a responsible way, we can draw down the populations in Guantanamo, make sure that the

American people are safe, and make sure that we're not providing the kinds of recruitment tools to terrorists that are so dangerous.

[At this point, the President signed the message to the House of Representatives returning the bill, H.R. 1735, without approval.]

There you go. All good? Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:52 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Message to the House of Representatives Returning Without Approval the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016 October 22, 2015

To the House of Representatives:

I am returning herewith without my approval H.R. 1735, the "National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016." While there are provisions in this bill that I support, including the codification of key interrogation-related reforms from Executive Order 13491 and positive changes to the military retirement system, the bill would, among other things, constrain the ability of the Department of Defense to conduct multi-year defense planning and align military capabilities and force structure with our national defense strategy, impede the closure of the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, and prevent the implementation of essential defense reforms.

This bill fails to authorize funding for our national defense in a fiscally responsible manner. It underfunds our military in the base budget, and instead relies on an irresponsible budget gimmick that has been criticized by members of both parties. Specifically, the bill's use of \$38 billion in Overseas Contingency Operations funding—which was meant to fund wars and is not subject to budget caps—does not provide the stable, multi-year budget upon which sound defense planning depends. Because this bill authorizes base budget funding at sequestration levels, it threatens the readiness and capabilities of our military and fails to

provide the support our men and women in uniform deserve. The decision reflected in this bill to circumvent rather than reverse sequestration further harms our national security by locking in unacceptable funding cuts for crucial national security activities carried out by non-defense agencies.

I have repeatedly called upon the Congress to work with my Administration to close the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and explained why it is imperative that we do so. As I have noted, the continued operation of this facility weakens our national security by draining resources, damaging our relationships with key allies and partners, and emboldening violent extremists. Yet in addition to failing to remove unwarranted restrictions on the transfer of detainees, this bill seeks to impose more onerous ones. The executive branch must have the flexibility, with regard to those detainees who remain at Guantanamo, to determine when and where to prosecute them, based on the facts and circumstances of each case and our national security interests, and when and where to transfer them consistent with our national security and our humane treatment policy. Rather than taking steps to bring this chapter of our history to a close, as I have repeatedly called upon the Congress to do, this bill aims to extend it.

The bill also fails to adopt many essential defense reforms, including to force structure, weapons systems, and military health care. Our defense strategy depends on investing every dollar where it will have the greatest effect. My Administration's proposals will accomplish this through critical reforms that divest unneeded force structure, slow growth in compensation, and reduce wasteful overhead. The restrictions in the bill would require the Department of Defense to retain unnecessary force structure and weapons systems that we

cannot afford in today's fiscal environment, contributing to a military that will be less capable of responding effectively to future challenges.

Because of the manner in which this bill would undermine our national security, I must veto it.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
October 22, 2015.

Remarks at the Democratic National Committee Women's Leadership Forum Annual Issues Conference October 23, 2015

The President. Hello, Democrats! Hello! Well—

Audience member. We love you!

The President. I love you too. Thank you. All right, if you have a seat, have a seat. Some of you don't, so—[*laughter*]. It is so good to be with all of you. Now, look, I like being in a room of Democrats, generally. I especially like being in a room of Democratic women. [*Laughter*]

Let me begin by saying that nobody works harder to strengthen this party up and down the ballot, in all 50 States, than our chair, Debbie Wasserman Schultz. And Debbie is—couldn't be here today because she's working to build up our party in Tennessee. She is relentless. She's got incredible partners in the CEO of the DNC, Amy Dacey—where's Amy? She's around here somewhere. Give Amy a big round of applause. She's working hard. And the Women's Leadership Forum cofounders, Cynthia Friedman and Carol Pinsky.

So it is good to see all of you. Many of you have been friends for a long time, and then, there are some of you who were 4 when I—[*laughter*—first ran for the Presidency. She's all, like, no, I was 5. [*Laughter*] The point, though, is, is that all of you are working hard to make sure that our party and our country moves forward.

And for the younger people here—let me refresh your memory—when we came togeth-

er 7 years ago, we did so not just to elect a President, but to reaffirm our faith in that most fundamental, basic American ideal that people who love this country can change it. A lot of you were involved in that movement. A lot of you have stayed involved ever since. And that faith sometimes has been tested: by war and recession and by politics and by obstruction and by a lot of cynics who said it was foolish for us to keep believing, that it was naive for us to keep on trying. But thanks to folks like you, thanks to Americans like you, this country is moving forward.

I mean, just think about the path we've traveled. What—

[*At this point, a baby cried out.*]

Yes! Yes. [*Laughter*] When I took office, we were losing 800,000 jobs a month, unemployment rate was on its way to 10 percent. Today, during the course of the longest streak of job growth on record, our businesses have created 13.2 million new jobs; unemployment is now at 5.1 percent.

When I took office, more than 15 percent of Americans went without the security of health insurance. Today, we've covered another 17 million Americans. For the first time on record, more than 90 percent of Americans have coverage. And for everybody who already had coverage, now insurance companies can't