

two-bedroom units, the median increase was 13.2 percent. In the previous two years, median rent increases were less than 1 percent. Flat funding for housing and homelessness programs would be simply unacceptable.

We have for some time faced a substance use crisis, and have reached 100,000 deaths from opioid overdoses already this year, up from about 93,000 in 2020. The Senate funding level for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is \$9.1 billion, \$3.1 billion more than funding in FY 2021. Without this substantial increase, we will not be able to cope with the continuing rise in opioid addiction.

The pandemic has markedly increased mental health problems. From August 2020 to February 2021, the CDC reported an increase in adults with anxiety or depressive disorders, from 36.4 percent to 41.5 percent, and reports rose of unmet mental health care needs. The proposed SAMHSA funding levels allow us to respond more adequately. The Senate Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee proposal would increase mental health services overall to \$2.97 billion, an increase of nearly \$1.2 billion over FY 2021. In particular, the Senate Subcommittee bill more than doubles funding for the Mental Health Block Grant, to \$1.58 billion for FY 2022. The House-passed funding for Labor-HHS-Education makes a welcome increase in Children's Mental Health funding, stopping the inflation-driven erosion that caused a 14 percent reduction from FY 2010 to FY 2020. We must not return to flat funding when the pandemic has adversely affected the mental health of millions of children and adults.

Over the past decade, we allowed our public health capacity to diminish, and as a consequence we were not ready to cope with COVID-19. The Senate Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee appropriations bill increases the Centers for Disease Control about \$1.85 billion over the current year, allowing for the agency to rebuild so that it can more effectively respond to COVID-19 and future health threats.

We know our economy is hampered by a mismatch between jobs available and people with the skills to fill those positions. FY 2022 appropriations proposals include increases in Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act programs (WIOA), YouthBuild, Registered Apprenticeships, and Reintegration of Ex-Offender programs, as well as a new National Youth Employment Program. These will lead to jobs with higher pay and broadly shared economic growth. These increases are needed to overcome a ten-year 17 percent reduction in WIOA programs and to move us forward.

There are too many important programs to list here. But we do wish to underscore that children have experienced many hardships during the pandemic, including unprecedented losses in education and alarming increases in reports of households with children sometimes or often not having enough to eat. The historic increases proposed in Title I K-12 education for students with low incomes and in special education funding are urgently needed to help children overcome the educational setbacks they have experienced. Title I spending rises by at least \$16.6 billion over FY 2021, and there will be a \$2.6 billion increase in IDEA state grants for more than 7.6 million students with disabilities.

The FY 2022 appropriations bills drawn up in the House and/or Senate include many important funding increases to help families care for their children. Funding for the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) nutrition program must accommodate an increase in benefits that was extended through the end of December in the current Continuing Resolution, and must not be allowed to expire at that time. In addition to the mental health,

housing, nutrition, and education funding already mentioned here, there are badly needed increases in child care, Head Start, early learning programs, and child abuse prevention and treatment programs. There are also urgently needed increases in funds to care for unaccompanied migrant children: at \$4.9 billion, a \$3.6 billion increase over FY 2021 in the Senate Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee bill.

The nation's recovery depends on strengthening a host of domestic programs that have been allowed to shrink for years, not just to get to where they had been before, but to respond to needs far greater because of the pandemic and its global economic dislocations. A long-term continuing resolution would be a severe failure to address these needs. We strongly urge you to enact omnibus appropriations legislation including all twelve bills as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

DEBORAH WEINSTEIN,
Executive Director.

NOVEMBER 10, 2021.

DEAR MAJORITY LEADER SCHUMER AND MINORITY LEADER MCCONNELL: On behalf of the millions of veterans our organizations represent, we write to express serious concerns about reports that the Senate is considering approving a full-year continuing resolution to fund the federal government for the remainder of fiscal year 2022, which would have significant negative consequences for veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors. Therefore, we are asking that you work together to ensure that veterans programs, benefits and medical services receive the full level of funding for fiscal year 2022 that was approved with strong bipartisan support (25 to 5) by the Senate Appropriations Committee in August.

As you know, Congress approved and the President signed a short-term continuing resolution (Public Law 117-43) on September 30th to fund the federal government through December 3, 2021, extending funding at the levels previously enacted in fiscal year 2021 appropriations legislation. Funding for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical care and benefit payments for fiscal year 2022 was previously approved in December 2020 as advance appropriations in Division J (Military Construction and Veterans Affairs) of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, Public Law 116-260. However, the advance appropriations process only works properly if funding levels are adjusted to address increased demand for benefits and services as part of the following year's regular appropriations process, as is necessary for fiscal year 2022. Further, if Congress passes a full-year continuing resolution, all other programs, services and benefits would remain funded at fiscal year 2021 levels, which would fall short of the anticipated needs.

For example, a full-year continuing resolution could result in an estimated \$7 billion shortfall in funding for mandatory compensation and pension benefits, in large part due to an increased number of benefit claims resulting from congressional approval of new diseases related to Agent Orange exposure for Vietnam veterans.

In addition, the time it takes to process these and other claims for benefits would be significantly increased without the \$300 million increase for the Veterans Benefits Administration approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee. Similarly, reductions from the Committee-approved levels for the Board of Veterans' Appeals and the National Cemetery Administration would negatively impact veterans and their survivors seeking their services and benefits.

Enacting a full-year continuing resolution would also negatively hamper veterans' abil-

ity to receive timely medical care absent the \$3.3 billion increase for Veterans Medical Community Care approved by the Senate Committee. VA's critical Medical and Prosthetic Research programs would be cut by \$67 million and funding to support VA's health care infrastructure would be cut \$450 million below the levels approved by the Committee if Congress passes a full-year continuing resolution.

As leaders of the Senate, we call on you to reject consideration of a full-year continuing resolution that would reduce veterans' funding below what has already been approved in an overwhelming bipartisan vote of the Senate Appropriations Committee. Instead, we ask that you use your influence to ensure that the Senate completes consideration of the fiscal year 2022 appropriations so that veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors have timely access to all the benefits, services and medical care they have earned.

Respectfully,

LAWRENCE W. MONTREUIL,
National Legislative Director, The American Legion.

JOY J. LLEM,
National Legislative Director, DAV (Disabled American Veterans).

TOM PORTER,
Executive Vice President, Government Affairs, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America.

HEATHER ANSLEY, ESQ.,
MSW,
Associate Executive Director of Government Relations, Paralyzed Veterans of America.

PATRICK MURRAY,
Director, National Legislative Service, Veterans of Foreign Wars.

DAN MERRY,
Colonel, USAF (Ret), Vice President for Government Relations, Military Officers Association of America.

SHARON HODGE,
Director for Policy and Government Affairs, Vietnam Veterans of America.

BRIAN DEMPSEY,
Government Affairs Director, Wounded Warrior Project.

Mr. LEAHY. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. OSSOFF). Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—H.R. 6119

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume legislative session and proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 6119, which was received from the House and is at the desk; that the only

amendment in order be Marshall-Lee No. 4868; that Senator LEE be recognized to speak for up to 10 minutes and that, following his remarks, the Senate vote on the Marshall amendment; that upon disposition of the Marshall amendment, the bill shall be considered read a third time and the Senate vote on passage of the bill, as amended, if amended, with 60 affirmative votes required for passage; that there be 6 minutes for debate equally divided in the usual form prior to each vote, all without further intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I am pleased to announce that an agreement has been reached between Democrats and Republicans that will allow the Senate to take up and pass the continuing resolution to fund the government through February 18. With this agreement, there will be no government shutdown, and I appreciate the work of my colleagues from both sides of the aisle, including Leader MCCONNELL, to reach this point. The good, bipartisan work that produced this agreement will give appropriators in both parties and in both Chambers time to reach a comprehensive agreement on appropriations by February 18 of next year.

I am glad that, in the end, cooler heads prevailed. The government will stay open. I thank the Members of this Chamber for walking us back from the brink of an avoidable, needless, and costly shutdown.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

FURTHER EXTENDING GOVERNMENT FUNDING ACT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume legislative session and proceed to the consideration of H.R. 6119, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 6119) making further continuing appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2022, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

AMENDMENT NO. 4868

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, 45 million Americans, 45 million hard-working moms and dads, neighbors, and friends are being threatened right now with

losing their jobs. They are being threatened not due to cyclical economic conditions, not because jobs aren't available, not because of some war or other calamity; their jobs are being threatened by their own government—a government that has chosen to tell them if they don't comply with a Presidential medical orthodoxy, they will be fired.

This is unfortunate. This is most unfortunate. It is most unfortunate that this power has been exercised this way. The President doesn't have that power. Congress hasn't given the President that power. Congress doesn't have that power to begin with. This is not a power that belongs in the Federal Government to begin with.

As a result of that, 45 million Americans are being threatened with their jobs. They are being forced to choose between an unwanted medical procedure and losing their job.

Look, I want to be very clear. I have been vaccinated. My family has been vaccinated. I believe the development of the vaccine is something of a modern medical miracle. I am grateful for the vaccine. I think the vaccine is helping Americans be safe from the effects of COVID. It is not the government's job. It is not within government's authority to tell people that they must be vaccinated, and if they don't get vaccinated, they will get fired.

It is wrong. It is immoral. You don't tell someone that if they don't do exactly what you want them to do, that they are going to lose their job. The American people overwhelmingly agree.

In fact, according to a recent Axios poll, only 14 percent of all Americans agree with the President of the United States that if someone declines to get the jab, they should lose their job.

Now, this is a huge percentage of the workforce in many States—most States, in fact. Somewhere between a quarter and a third of all workers are now being faced with the possibility of losing their job because of these vaccine mandates. This, at a time when Americans are struggling just to put food on the table, in part, because we have a government that is spending too much money it doesn't have.

It is churning up money, printing it, in effect, in a way that results in rampant inflation; in a way that makes limited paychecks go less far, less capable of buying bread to put on the table. And amidst all of this government-manufactured crisis, government is making it worse; threatening to not just make that paycheck go even less far than it already does because of government but to take it away altogether. That is not kind; that is not the neighborly way in which we like to do things; it is not moral; and it is not constitutional.

Look, it is tragic that this many Americans have to have their jobs threatened as a result of a Presidential temper tantrum. There is nothing about it that is OK. Deep down, we all know that it is not OK.

I will tell you, there is another thing that is not OK. It is not OK that those who want to take away those jobs, those who are just fine with the President exercising this authority fought tooth and nail to prevent the U.S. Senate from taking the vote that we are preparing to take tonight, a simple vote—a simple vote that simply allows us to weigh in and decide whether or not we are going to fund that part of government, that feature of our government that is going to enforce the vaccine mandate.

Those in this Chamber who shamefully were refusing over and over again to let us even cast a vote on that simple measure threatened to shut down all of government because they didn't want to have us have a chance, as the people's elected lawmakers, to decide whether or not we should proceed with vaccine mandate enforcement. They would rather shut down the government and make everything worse than they would stand accountable for what they are doing.

Fortunately, this part of the story at least has a happy ending. We are going to be able to vote on that tonight. We are going to be able to vote on whether or not we fund vaccine mandate enforcement at the Federal level.

This is wonderful. This is fantastic. It should not have resulted in days and days of shutdown threats and days and days of deflection, accusing other people of wanting to shut down the government when all we wanted to do was have a vote, to give a chance to the hard-working mom or dad, soldier, sailor, airman, or marine struggling to put food on the table. That is all we wanted. And all they wanted to do is use it as an excuse to deflect onto others that which they are doing.

We can do better than this. We must do better than this. The American people deserve better than this. That is why I am so glad and grateful that we will be casting this vote tonight.

But know this: This issue is not going away. I hope with everything in me that when we cast this vote tonight, that a majority of us will do the right thing and that we will vote the way that we know we should vote; that we will stand with those people who may lose their jobs. Thirty-one percent of the workers in my State—and in other States, it is higher. Thirty-nine percent of the workers in West Virginia stand to lose their jobs, 37 percent of the workers in Alabama, 33 percent of the workers in Georgia. In State after State, you see hard-working moms and dads being threatened.

This isn't right. It is not even an authority that the President has. It is not authority that the Congress has. We shouldn't be doing this. Deep down, we all know that is right. We also know that some of these problems result from the fact that when we fund the government, we have made significant mistakes as a result of the fact we have allowed so many spending decisions to be concentrated in one vote on one bill,