

# Please Call Congress re: FY 16 Funding

**Summary:** 1) VAWA, VOCA and FVPSA funding, and all federal funding for Fiscal Year 16, depend on Congress finalizing an FY 16 Appropriations bill. We are asking you to take action on this. 2) NNEDV is working to ensure that the final bill includes the best funding levels possible for VAWA, FVPSA and VOCA. See below for more details and a call to action (for Coalitions). Please feel free to modify this email and send to local programs.

## Details

The prospect of a federal government shutdown has become more real in the last few weeks. As you know, Congress has until September 30<sup>th</sup> to complete a funding bill to ensure that the federal government can stay open and that its departments can continue to operate. Congress still has time to pass a continuing resolution (a measure to ensure funding while they work out a longer-term solution) but politics are getting in the way. See Hill article at the bottom of page 2.

We have worked really hard in this budget cycle to secure stable and even increased proposed funding for VAWA, VOCA and FVPSA. The lack of a budget agreement and an FY16 Appropriations bill jeopardizes our work. **Let's join together and ask Congress to develop a budget deal and finalize the FY16 funding bills.** See below for 1) Action steps; 2) Background information; and 3) Specific information on VAWA, VOCA and FVPSA. Please let us know if you have any questions and thank you for your incredible advocacy.

**Action:** Please call your Senators and Representatives and ask them to:

- 1) First pass a short-term Continuing Resolution to prevent a harmful and completely unnecessary government shutdown;
- 2) Negotiate a budget deal to raise the spending caps by equal amounts for both defense and nondefense programs, in order to provide funds to invest in programs that are essential to our communities; and
- 3) Pass an FY 16 omnibus appropriations bill that provides the resources needed for the broad range of critical non-defenses discretionary programs, including increased investment in programs that address domestic and sexual violence (VAWA, VOCA and FVSPA).

Note: We aren't asking local programs to call Congress now because they are focused on completing the DV Counts Census tomorrow. If local programs reach out and ask what they can do, however, you can certainly encourage them to make calls. After the Census, we may ask you to forward an action request to local programs.

## Background information:

The FY 16 budget impasse is due to a number of factors. One of the most significant problems facing Congress for the FY 16 Appropriations cycle is the sequester-level budget caps that Congress must adhere to in each of the Appropriations bills. Plainly, the spending bills were allocated a lower spending authorization than needed to maintain funding and address increasing demands. The President and Democrats oppose the sequester-level budget caps. Even though the Appropriations bills have made moved through part of the Appropriations process in the House and the Senate, this impasse has stalled all action.

A national coalition of advocates, organized under the name NDD United (non-defense discretionary) have joined together to urge Congress to overcome this impasse with a budget that repeals the budget caps and invests in programs. Many of you signed a letter to that effect – thank you!

Now we need to amplify the message about a fair budget AND send an urgent message to Congress to avoid the government shutdown. See action above!

This [blog](#) gives a great update on the state of budget discussions and an overview campaign to raise the budget caps.

### **Specific information on VAWA, VOCA and FVPSA:**

As you know, the House finished their CJS and LHHS appropriations bills. The Senate moved the bills through the Appropriations Committees but did not pass the bills on the floor. If/when a budget deal is done and Congress can move forward with FY 16 funding, the work in the Committees sets the blueprint for negotiations on the final numbers for VAWA, VOCA and FVPSA. This [chart](#) outlines the funding levels in the House and the Senate bills.

Though the bigger process has stalled, we are still working with Congress to influence the negotiations on our specific funding streams. We are advocating that the final bills include the higher funding level for VAWA, VOCA and FVPSA from either the House or Senate bills.

As you may recall, the VOCA funding levels are quite different in the House and Senate because the Senate funded other DOJ programs, including some VAWA programs, with VOCA funds. We object to this inappropriate use of VOCA funds and are making that clear to Congress. NNEDV is leading a national letter to the House and Senate appropriations committees that outlines our position on VOCA funds, and VAWA and FVPSA funds. We may reach out to a few of you who have Senators and Representatives in Appropriations leadership to encourage them to adhere to our recommendations regarding funding.

### **Government Shutdown**

We are preparing for the possibility of a federal government shutdown and will be sure to communicate any advice and messaging to you.

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# **The Hill: Prospect of shutdown grows**

The prospect of a second government shutdown in two years is growing as House conservatives pledge to oppose any funding measure that includes money for Planned Parenthood.

GOP leaders face a familiar problem.

A measure that blocks funding for Planned Parenthood would almost certainly lack the votes to pass the Senate, and would be vetoed by President Obama.

But Republicans in the House don't have enough GOP votes to approve a funding measure that continues funding for Planned Parenthood, and don't want to negotiate with Democrats.

Conservatives headed to their districts on Friday expressing certainty that they would force GOP leaders to include a hold on Planned Parenthood funding.

And as in past funding fights, they insisted it would be the Democrats and President Obama who would be blamed for a shutdown.

"Will the president shut down and defund the troops in order to fund Planned Parenthood?" said Rep. Tim Huelskamp (R-Kan.). "I don't think he's that politically stupid, but we shall see."

Rep. Walter Jones (R-N.C.), another conservative, sounded a similar theme.

"I've seen too many times up here that a threat of a shutdown is why you compromise your principles, and I am sick and tired of compromising my principles," he said.

The remarks from the lawmakers reflect the strong feelings among House conservatives.

The conservative House Freedom Caucus, with more than 40 members, on Thursday vowed to oppose any spending bill that includes Planned Parenthood funds.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) has been the leading Republican opponent of demands to link an end to Planned Parenthood's funding with the government-funding measure.

On Friday in an interview with Politico, he sent the signal that Senate Republicans have had enough, calling the linkage "an exercise in futility" with President Obama in the White House.

"I'm anxious to defund Planned Parenthood," McConnell said, before adding that "the honest answer of that is that's not going to happen until you have a president who has a similar view."

Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) is the only Republican in the upper chamber loudly calling for a showdown on the spending bill over Planned Parenthood, which has been targeted fiercely after the release of a series of undercover videos showing officials discussing the sale of fetal tissue.

Yet it is far from clear that McConnell's view will sway conservatives in the House, who have viewed him with suspicion.

Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio), who is getting threats again on his leadership position, has been cautious in his remarks about the House GOP's next steps.

Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) said Friday that the House will vote next week on a standalone bill to defund Planned Parenthood for one year while investigations take place.

But it is unclear that the step will appease conservatives, since the measure would be dead on arrival in the Senate.

Some conservatives on Friday said Boehner was in a familiar position.

"He either has to make a bad deal with Democrats or shut down the government. Those are his unfortunate options," Rep. Trent Franks (R-Ariz.) said after emerging from a closed-door meeting on Planned Parenthood with 40 to 50 other Republicans on Friday. "I think this can create a civil war in the House of Representatives."

Boehner and McConnell also have the GOP presidential race to worry about.

When they return to Washington next week, they will have about two weeks to come up with a short-term solution. And on Wednesday, GOP presidential candidates, including Cruz, are sure to be asked about what should be done when they square off in a debate. It has the potential to complicate the leaders' already difficult jobs.

"The American people should no longer be forced to fund the abortion industry; therefore we will oppose any government funding legislation that would authorize or provide federal funds for Planned Parenthood," Cruz wrote in a letter circulated this week.

Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.), another presidential candidate, is also calling on GOP leaders to make a stand. "We should hold our ground," he said on Thursday.

Outside groups are also turning up the heat. Susan B. Anthony List, a leading anti-abortion group, said the standalone House defunding bill is "very important," but is not enough.

"It is vital that the House register its stance on defunding Planned Parenthood with a meaningful vote," Marjorie Dannenfelser, the group's president, said in a statement. "No one should feel comfortable affixing his or her name to a budget that prolongs this atrocity."

Other Republicans, like McConnell, want to avoid any repeat of the 16-day government shutdown in 2013 that hurt their party. Their hope is that cooler heads will prevail.

"If you really want to solve the problem, get a pro-life president in 18 months," said Rep. Tom Cole (R-Okla.) "In the interim, I think we can make some progress and do some good things, but the hearings are an important part of educating the public."

He also said it was a bad idea to tie a shutdown to the anti-abortion rights movement because Planned Parenthood has a strong base of support.

“People remember, we shut down the government over ObamaCare, which was very unpopular,” he said. “Planned Parenthood is not unpopular. Its polling is actually very strong. If you're going to do something that affects funding, you need to make the case.”

Rep. Charlie Dent (R-Pa.), a centrist, agreed a shutdown would be a “tactical and strategic blunder.”

“I think most of the serious people around here understand that shutting down the government would be a huge error,” he said. “Hopefully, there’s enough serious people who can stop those who don’t share a serious sense of governance.”

Ultimately, GOP leaders will have no choice, but to bring up a “clean” CR, Dent said.

“Well, at the end of the day, we’re going to vote on a clean CR,” Dent said. “The question is will we vote on it before or after September 30? I propose we vote on it before September 30.”

But even then, GOP leaders could be challenged.

House Democrats are demanding [negotiations](#) with GOP leaders on a budget. They also want spending limits known as the sequester to be lifted, and it’s not clear they’d back a short-term spending measure written by the GOP with no concessions.

*Sarah Ferris contributed.*