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Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20515-6015

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April 21, 2008

Dear Chairman Obey,

*David*

Following up on our meeting last week, I am writing to inquire about the Committee's plan for the markup of the FY 2008 supplemental appropriations act for the Global War on Terror. As I indicated to you in that conversation, I am very disturbed by recent press reports indicating that the massive spending bill may go straight to the House floor, bypassing Appropriations Committee action altogether.

As a loyal institutionalist with a true respect for the Committee and for the democratic processes of the legislative branch, I know you share my commitment to upholding the rules and traditions of the House. Because of your longstanding dedication to this institution, I think you would agree that bypassing Committee consideration of the supplemental would be a flagrant abuse of the Rules of the House of Representatives and would set a disturbing precedent for this Committee's ability to fulfill our oversight and funding responsibilities.

Since 1989, Congress has enacted 36 supplemental appropriations bills. Of those 36 bills, only seven did not receive a mark-up by the House Appropriations Committee. These seven bills were developed with input and agreement from both parties and represented unique circumstances that necessitated rapid response by Congress - such as post-9/11 disaster relief, Hurricane Katrina disaster rescue and recovery, and unexpected shortfalls in funding for Operation Desert Storm.

Never in 20 years has the House Appropriations Committee been bypassed on a supplemental funding bill such as the one currently under consideration. This is especially troubling given the fact that it may total in excess of 20% of the regular discretionary spending provided last year for the entire federal government. In addition, I cannot recall anytime in my years in the House that the Members of the Committee on both sides of the aisle have not been included in the development of a supplemental appropriations bill.

CLERK AND STAFF DIRECTOR  
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It has been a year and a half since the President sent up his full funding request, and it is essential that this spending bill be approved expediently. However, this enormous supplemental bill must not be considered in a manner that subverts the normal precedent of the House, circumvents a regular, open, and proper appropriations process, or that prevents fair participation by both parties. There is enough time for a thorough, proper Committee process to be completed - if we begin consideration this week - without causing any further delay in the floor action.

To be clear, any attempt to bypass the normal supplemental appropriations process will be strongly opposed by the Republican Members of the Committee. The American people deserve and expect a fair and transparent legislative process, not one rife with procedural tricks and loopholes designed to gag opposing and alternate views.

We hope and expect that Members of the Committee and the House can work in a bipartisan way to pass this emergency spending bill. We look forward to the prompt consideration of a clean supplemental bill under the normal and proper appropriations process.

Sincerely,



Ranking Member Jerry Lewis  
House Appropriations Committee

CC: Speaker Nancy Pelosi  
Majority Leader Steny Hoyer  
Republican Leader John Boehner  
Republican Whip Roy Blunt