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UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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NATIVE AMERICAN CAUCUS,
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A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Betty McCollum".

Congresswoman Betty McCollum
Statement for the Record
Conference Report to Accompany H.R. 1735 –
National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016

October 1, 2015

Ms. McCOLLUM of Minnesota: Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the *Conference Report to Accompany H.R. 1735, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016*.

As a member of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, I take issue with the irresponsible manner in which this authorization approaches funding of our National Defense. This bill uses the Overseas Contingency Operations fund to avoid congressionally mandated budget caps for fiscal year 2016—an approach that fails to provide the appropriate budget and funding structure that enables the Department of Defense to operate in the most effective and efficient manner over both the short-term and long-term planning horizons. This is Congress' most important role. We need to do this right.

In addition, this Conference Report prevents the responsible transfer of detainees from Guantanamo Bay and continues the existence of a detention facility which serves as propaganda for extremists and undermines our moral standing in the world. Many of the detainees who remain were cleared for transfer nearly six years ago by the Guantanamo Review Task Force—an interagency effort that included the Departments of Defense, Justice, State, and Homeland Security, as well as the Director of National Intelligence. The transfer restrictions interfere with the administration's executive role in responsibly closing this facility, wasting valuable resources, and making us less safe. This facility needs to be closed.

H.R. 1735 fails to heed the expert advice and request of numerous senior leaders in the Department of Defense, Department of the Air Force, and Department of the Army, who all repeatedly testified regarding the problem of sustaining excess facilities. I understand that many of my colleagues are concerned about potentially losing a military base in their district; however, we should not force the Defense Department to hold onto excess infrastructure and assets that are of diminishing military value. The best way to address this problem is to authorize a Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) and ensure our military bases are operating in the smartest, most efficient and effective manner. This bill prevents that from happening.

I recognize that passing the NDAA is described as a tradition, but tradition is an inadequate reason to support legislation that undermines the ability of our Defense leaders to properly manage the largest portion of our federal budget—the portion responsible for National Security—and effectively undermines the health and safety of the women and men who carry out that mission.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in opposing the *Conference Report to Accompany H.R. 1735 – National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016*