



CHAIRMEN

BILL FRENZEL
JIM NUSSLE
TIM PENNY
CHARLIE STENHOLM

PRESIDENT

MAYA MACGUINEAS

DIRECTORS

BARRY ANDERSON
ERSKINE BOWLES
CHARLES BOWSHER
KENT CONRAD
DAN CRIPPEN
VIC FAZIO
WILLIS GRADISON
WILLIAM HOAGLAND
JIM JONES
LOU KERR
JIM KOLBE
DAVE MCCURDY
JAMES MCINTYRE, JR.
DAVID MINGE
MARNE OBERNAUER, JR.
JUNE O'NEILL
PAUL O'NEILL
BOB PACKWOOD
LEON PANETTA
RUDOLPH PENNER
PETER PETERSON
ROBERT REISCHAUER
ALICE RIVLIN
CHARLES ROBB
MARTIN SABO
ALAN K. SIMPSON
JOHN SPRATT
GENE STEUERLE
DAVID STOCKMAN
JOHN TANNER
TOM TAUKE
LAURA TYSON
GEORGE VOINOVICH
PAUL VOLCKER
CAROL COX WAIT
DAVID M. WALKER
JOSEPH WRIGHT, JR.

Veterans Proposal Offers a Blank Check and No Accountability

June 11, 2014

The Senate this week is expected to vote on legislation to improve veterans benefits. According to press reports, however, the legislation would use an emergency designation to sidestep pay-as-you-go rules and include an open-ended mandatory appropriation to implement provisions of the legislation, increasing the deficit by tens of billions of dollars.

CRFB President Maya MacGuineas made the following statement:

“Supporting our veterans should be one of the highest priorities of our country and our federal government, and doing so requires addressing their unmet needs responsibly and reliably. A secure funding plan is at the heart of any responsible plan.”

“The ‘emergency’ designation is for sudden, unforeseen, and temporary needs – none of which define this situation – not a tool for politicians who are unwilling to pay the bills. Budgeting is about prioritizing, but by resorting to abusing the emergency escape clause, Washington is once again looking for the easy way out.”

“The legislation also includes an unprecedented open-ended mandatory appropriation that basically gives the VA a blank check to spend as it wishes. Given recent reports, one would think Congress would want more accountability at the VA, not less.”

“In its current form, this bill simply doesn’t pass the basic test of responsibility. Appropriations should be specified by the Appropriations Committee – and offset, as Chairwoman Barbara Mikulski has said she would do – not decided unilaterally by the agencies. And as for offsets, there are plenty of options available in legislation previously introduced by Senate Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Bernie Sanders, in [CBO reports](#), and elsewhere. The emergency designation is not only irresponsible but unnecessary.”

“The problems at the VA are at least in part a consequence of the across-the-board budget reductions from sequestration. Rather than relying on irresponsible budget tactics to plug these holes one at a time, our leaders should focus on broader solutions that prioritize and pay for the type of government we want.”

“Our veterans and our grandchildren both deserve better.”

###