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**CROmnibus Would Avoid Shutdown but Includes Budget Gimmicks
December 10, 2014**

Congressional leaders have settled on a \$1.1 trillion spending package that would fund most of the federal government through the current fiscal year.

Maya MacGuineas, president of the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, made the following statement:

"That Congress appears to have agreed to full-year funding for 11 of the 12 appropriations bills -- avoiding a government shutdown -- is welcome news. But the legislation includes too many gimmicks and is coming too late in the legislative process.

"Appropriations bills are supposed to pass well before the October 1 start of the fiscal year, not two months after it has begun. The pattern of policymakers governing after-the-fact is unfortunately an increasingly common one, as demonstrated by not only by this legislation but the tax extenders bill, which arrived more than 11 months after the tax breaks expired. Policymakers can't keep missing their deadlines if they intend to start making responsible policy choices. We need to get back to something that at least resembles regular order.

"The package itself also raises some concerns. While it complies with discretionary spending limits on paper, it relies on several budgetary gimmicks to mask spending in excess of those limits. These include nearly \$20 billion in phantom "savings" from CHIMPs (changes in mandatory programs) that are scored as savings on paper but produce none in reality, a shift of several billion from the base defense budget into the uncapped war budget, and at least \$3 billion of hidden tax cuts and mandatory spending increases that are not offset, with the revenue losses explicitly exempt from PAYGO.

"These gimmicks must stop. If lawmakers cannot make the tough choices necessary to spend within existing discretionary caps, they should replace a portion of the sequestration cuts -- which will return in full next October -- with more thoughtful reforms focused on the entitlement programs that are actually driving our debt.

"Making these reforms will require proactive steps and discussions starting now, not waiting until the eleventh hour and certainly not continuing to govern after the fact."

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