

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

WASHINGTON, DC 20515

February 5, 2016

The Honorable Tom Price
Chairman
Committee on the Budget
207 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

As required by Section 301(d) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 (P.L. 93-344) and in response to your letter of January 12, 2016, this letter transmits the Views and Estimates of the Committee on Ways and Means on those aspects of the Federal budget for the Fiscal Year 2017 that fall within the Committee's jurisdiction.

The current pace of the economic recovery is insufficient as growth in productivity and the labor force are historically weak. As such, the Committee will continue to focus on promoting policies that spur private sector job creation and economic growth. These policies include reforming the tax code to make American employers and workers more competitive; expanding trade especially through providing new opportunities to grow exports of American made goods and services and by reducing the burden placed on American employers by the recent rapid growth in budget deficits; reforming welfare to help more families escape poverty, reward work, and support upward mobility; reducing the national debt; and eliminating inefficient and counter-productive government regulations.

I. Legislative Issues with Budgetary Impact

- A. Human Resources – The Committee will work to reform welfare programs under the Committee's jurisdiction to reduce poverty and promote opportunity. It will review the operation of current unemployment benefits and programs, and propose improvements as needed. The Committee will also continue its work to reauthorize the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, review the effectiveness of the Child Support Enforcement and Child Care and Development Block Grant programs to ensure they target those most in-need and promote economic mobility through employment, and consider policies to improve the child welfare system. The Committee will continue its effort to strengthen the exchange of program data to improve administrative efficiency and reduce waste, fraud, and abuse. The Committee will also continue its general oversight over the Human Resources programs under its jurisdiction, including reviewing program interactions, eligibility standards, and duplication. The Committee will also review and act, as appropriate, on proposals in the President's Fiscal Year 2017 Budget.

- B. Medicare and Other Health Care Issues – The Committee will closely oversee the implementation of the health care overhaul and its impact on federal spending, the economy, those who already have insurance, employers, Medicare beneficiaries, and health care providers. In addition, the Committee will look for ways to reform the Medicare program to ensure its sustainability for current and future beneficiaries. The Committee will also examine policies that reduce the cost of health insurance, increase health care quality and improve outcomes, protect access to care, encourage transparency, and eliminate waste, fraud, and abuse.
- C. Social Security –The Committee will work to strengthen Social Security programs by examining the financing challenges facing Social Security’s retirement, survivors and disability programs, with particular focus on the role of Social Security benefits for today’s and future beneficiaries, the cost to taxpayers and beneficiaries of delays in addressing those challenges, and proposed solutions. With the disability program also experiencing ongoing management challenges, the Committee will examine how the Social Security Administration is reducing the program’s susceptibility to fraud, especially in light of the changes in the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015 (P.L. 114-74). In addition, the Committee will examine the agency’s deployment of tight resources to serve the public and taxpayers and provide oversight of the management, performance, program stewardship and long-range strategic planning related to Social Security programs. The Committee will also continue to pursue options to better protect individuals, including children, from identity theft related to the proliferation of use and misuse of Social Security numbers.
- D. Tax – The Committee recognizes that a complex, burdensome, anti-growth tax code remains a significant obstacle to strong economic growth and job creation. Accordingly, the Committee anticipates continuing its extensive efforts to enact pro-growth tax reform that simplifies and reforms the tax code for individuals, families, and employers, in order to spur the investment and robust job creation that is necessary for economic growth. In so doing, the Committee will take a fresh look at tax policy proposals related to tax reform, while building on its record from the 112th and 113th Congresses and the First Session of this Congress, which featured more than 30 hearings devoted to tax reform, as well as the work of 11 Tax Reform Working Groups, the formal release of a discussion draft of former-Chairman Camp’s Tax Reform Act of 2014, and the enactment of significant permanent tax policies in the Protecting Americans from Tax Hikes (PATH) Act of 2015. In addition, the Committee will continue to review other tax matters and will closely scrutinize the revenue recommendations contained in the President’s Fiscal Year 2017 Budget.
- E. Trade – The Committee seeks to increase economic opportunities for American workers, farmers, and businesses by opening new markets to U.S. goods and services, eliminating foreign trade barriers to our goods and services, and enforcing U.S. rights under our trade agreements. With respect to trade negotiations, the Committee intends to consider whether the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement complies with the requirements of the Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities and Accountability Act of 2015. In addition, the Committee will continue its oversight over the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership negotiations, the Trade in Services Agreement negotiations, the Environmental Goods Agreement negotiations, expansion of the Information Technology Agreement, implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement, negotiation of Bilateral

Investment Treaty negotiations, and the U.S. role in the World Trade Organization, including U.S. goals, negotiations, dispute settlement, and WTO accessions. The Committee will also continue its oversight over the operation of U.S. preference programs for developing countries, including the Generalized System of Preferences and the African Growth and Opportunity Act, as well as over the Trade Adjustment Assistance programs. The Committee will continue its oversight over the budgets and activities of agencies within its jurisdiction, including the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and the U.S. International Trade Commission. The Committee will continue its oversight over issues and opportunities in trade with emerging economies, including China and India, and the Administration's enforcement of trade agreement rules. Finally, the Committee intends to continue work to create a process, in accordance with House rules, for Congressional consideration of the Miscellaneous Tariff Bill, a package of noncontroversial bills to eliminate or reduce duties on products not made in the United States.

II. The Fiscal Year 2017 Budget

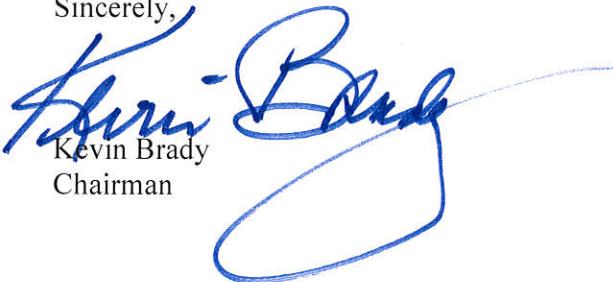
The Committee will review the President's Fiscal Year 2017 Budget. This review will provide the Committee the opportunity to assess the effectiveness of the President's budget in promoting job creation and economic growth, reducing budget deficits and debt, and ensuring the long-term sustainability of programs within the Committee's jurisdiction.

III. Public Debt Limit

The current statutory public debt limit already is now greater than the gross domestic product of the United States. While the Committee recognizes its responsibility to ensure that the United States meets all its obligations, the current growth of the national debt is not sustainable. Current debt levels are already a threat to economic growth and unless action is taken, the projected increase in the national debt will threaten the economic foundation of the country. Thus the Committee intends to pursue policies to slow and ultimately reverse the growth in the national debt and prevent the need for future increases in the statutory debt limit.

The Committee on Ways and Means looks forward to working with the Committee on the Budget as we promote prosperity, opportunity, security, and fiscal prudence.

Sincerely,


Kevin Brady
Chairman