

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

November 14, 2006

Honorable Rob Portman  
Director  
Office of Management and Budget  
Executive Office of the President  
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Director Portman,

As you make decisions on the President's fiscal year 2008 budget plan, we urge you to consider the budgetary realities facing Congress. Specifically, we request that the budget not include proposals -- whether they are fee increases, changes to mandatory programs, or similar authorization proposals that are not within the jurisdiction of the Appropriations Committee -- that have the effect of lowering the discretionary spending top line while having little or no chance of being enacted into law.

It has become routine that budget requests, not only those of the current Administration but also of previous Administrations, include numerous proposals that lower total discretionary spending levels without actually reducing program levels. Examples from recent budgets include increased Transportation Security Administration passenger security fees, Department of Veterans Affairs medical services enrollment fees and increased pharmaceutical copayments, and recalls of student loan funds. None of these are in the jurisdiction of the Appropriations Committee. Such proposals enable the Administration to appear to offset discretionary spending and present a total for such spending that is artificially low.

Though we are supportive of budgetary proposals that represent good government policy and reduce wasteful spending, the purpose of this letter is not to debate the substantive merits of specific proposals. In fact, we may have differing points of view on their individual merits. We have serious objections, however, to being asked to enact savings or fee proposals that are clearly not under our jurisdiction. If the President wishes to propose new fees or mandatory savings, he should propose them on the mandatory side of the budget where they belong, not as offsets to discretionary spending. These proposals simply force us to cut presidential and congressional program priorities to meet a constrained budget resolution discretionary target. Further, by complicating our consideration of the President's budget, such proposals create a major impediment to Congress completing its appropriations work on time.

Honorable Rob Portman  
November 14, 2006

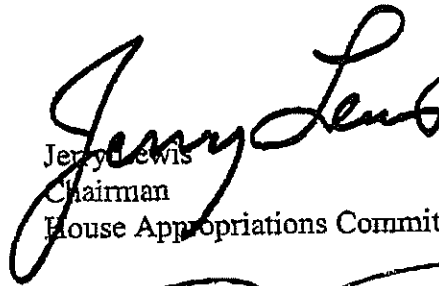
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We want the opportunity to start the fiscal year 2008 appropriations process in a manner that embodies realistic and sensible budget policy. We request your support in making this possible by ensuring that the fiscal year 2008 budget request does not contain questionable and unrealistic fees or changes to mandatory programs that artificially reduce discretionary spending.

Sincerely,



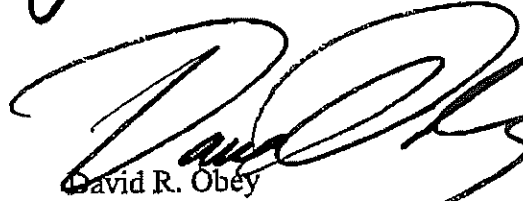
Thad Cochran  
Chairman  
Senate Appropriations Committee



Jerry Lewis  
Chairman  
House Appropriations Committee



Robert C. Byrd  
Ranking Minority Member  
Senate Appropriations Committee



David R. Obey  
Ranking Minority Member  
House Appropriations Committee