



June 10, 2024

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart
Chair
Subcomm. on State, Foreign Ops., & Rel. Progs.
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairs Cole and Diaz-Balart,

I write on behalf of the Natural Resources Defense Council (“NRDC”), a national, non-profit environmental organization with more than three million members and activists, along with an array of lawyers, scientists, and other environmental specialists who have worked since 1970 to protect the world’s natural resources, public health, and environment. We at NRDC are dismayed by the House’s bill making appropriations for the Department of State, foreign operations, and related programs (“SFOPs”) for fiscal year 2025 (“FY25”), which is slated to be marked up by the Appropriations Committee this week.¹

The annual SFOPs bills make essential investments to protect the prosperity and security of the United States and its allies from threats at home and abroad, and there are few threats greater than those posed by climate change.² Unfortunately, this anemic attempt at an FY25 SFOPs measure fails utterly on this front—particularly when it comes to confronting the dangers posed by a rapidly warming planet. *First*, its short-sighted 12 percent reduction in topline funding from FY24 ensures that few of the bill’s important initiatives (in *any* area of foreign policy) will receive sufficient investment. *Second*, its plethora of riders barring funding for important environmental programs read like a climate disaster manifesto. These poison pill provisions would cut off support for many vital endeavors, including:

- (i) efforts to strengthen our allies and partners and ward off geopolitical instability by promoting clean economic development, protecting nature, and building resilience to economic shocks;³
- (ii) initiatives that promote energy security and technology diffusion, including from American businesses, by investing in clean technology projects in developing

¹ H. COMM. ON APPROPRIATIONS, 118TH CONG., MAKING APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, FOREIGN OPERATIONS, AND RELATED PROGRAMS FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2025, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES (Comm. Print, as reported by H. Subcomm. on SFOPs, June 4, 2024) (hereinafter “House SFOPs Bill”).

² See generally U.S. GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE, GAO-22-105830, CLIMATE CHANGE RISKS TO NATIONAL SECURITY (Sept. 2022), available at <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-22-105830.pdf> (summarizing the risks of climate change to national security and listing an array of GAO reports on the topic).

³ Via participation in the Green Climate Fund (“GCF”). See House SFOPs Bill, *supra* note 1, § 7061(a). See generally Brendan Guy & Joe Thwaites, *U.S. Delivers for the Green Climate Fund and the World’s Most Vulnerable*, NRDC EXPERT BLOG (Apr. 20, 2023), <https://www.nrdc.org/bio/joe-thwaites/us-delivers-green-climate-fund-and-worlds-most-vulnerable> (discussing the GCF’s purpose and importance).

- countries,⁴ while ensuring that the United States has influence at the decision-making table as the world accelerates toward a clean energy future;⁵ and
- (iii) the implementation of a host of executive actions geared toward the protection of our shared health, economic security, and commitment to equity in the face of a rapidly changing climate.⁶

Third, and finally, the bill calls for an improvident study on the impact of funds appropriated over the past five fiscal years on global temperatures.⁷ It should go without saying that stemming the tide of climate change will require sustained effort, deliberate thought, and *time*. A reductive glimpse at a five-year term on a single balance sheet will offer precisely nothing of value when it comes to the tackling of one of the great crises of our day.

In short, the House SFOPs bill—in its present form—represents a wholesale abdication of American leadership in many regards, but especially when it comes to our stewardship of the environment. It should be set aside in favor of a more serious, realistic, and bipartisan effort at actionable legislation.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Kyle T. Jones
Director, Federal Affairs

cc: The Hon. Rosa DeLauro, Committee on Appropriations, Ranking Member;
The Hon. Barbara Lee, Subcomm. on State, Foreign Ops., & Rel. Progs., Ranking Member

⁴ In the form of the Clean Technology Fund. *See* House SFOPs Bill, *supra* note 1, § 7061(b).

⁵ Under the terms of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (commonly known as the “Paris Agreement”). *See id.* § 7061(f). *See generally* Brendan Guy & Jake Schmidt, *Why the Paris Agreement Is Good for the United States*, NRDC EXPERT BLOG (Jan. 31, 2017) (setting out why the Paris Agreement “is in the national interest of all countries around the world”).

⁶ *See* House SFOPs Bill, *supra* note 1, § 7061(g).

⁷ *See id.* § 7061(h).